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HISTORY
OF
BENGALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

[A Series of Lectures delivered as Reader to the Calcutta University]

BY

PROF. DINESH CHANDRA SEN, B.A., D.LITT.
FORMERLY RASTANU LAHIRI RESEARCH FELLOW, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

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MUNSHI RAM MANOHAR LAL
SANSKRIT & HINDI BOOK-SELLERS
NAI SARAK, DELHI-6.

SECOND EDITION

Indian Price: Rs. 20/- ; Foreign Price: 3£ & 7·50$

PRINTED IN INDIA

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY SIBENDRANATH KANJILAL,
SUPERINTENDENT, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS,
48, HAZRA ROAD, BALLYGUNGE, CALCUTTA.

1236B—April, 1954—E

To THE

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE

ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE, SARASWATI,

C.S.I., M.A., D.L., D.Sc., F.R.A.S., F.R.S.E.,

VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY,

Whose sound and far-sighted educational measures in furthering the cause of our beautiful language will be ever gratefully remembered by his countrymen

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PREFACE

This work consists of the lectures delivered by me as Reader in Bengali Language and Literature to the Calcutta University during the months of January to April, 1909, at the Senate House, Calcutta. They treat of our language and literature from the earliest times down to 1850.

The volume, now presented to the public, has very little affinity with my Bengali work on the same subject, for which I was granted a literary pension by the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for India in 1899. There must, of course, be something in common between the two books, dealing as they do with the same subject, but the arrangement adopted in the present work is altogether new, and the latest facts, not anticipated in my Bengali treatise, have been incorporated in it.

It should be borne in mind that our early Bengali literature had the strange characteristic of forming a gift from the lower to the higher classes. The more cultured ranks of our society under Hindoo rule delighted in the study of classical Sanskrit ; during the Mahomedan period, Arabic and Persian were added to this ; and the vernacular literature deemed it always a great honour and privilege if it could only now and then obtain an approving nod from the aristocracy. This perhaps accounts for the somewhat vulgar humour that characterises old Bengali writing. But in spite of occasional coarseness a depth of poetry throbbed in the heart of the multitude. I refer my readers particularly to the Mangala Gans, to the works of the Manasa and Chandi-cults, and to the Yatra and Kavi songs. For the great Vaisnava period of our literature, on the other hand, no apology is necessary. In this our people attained the very flowering point of the literary sense. I do not know how far I

have been successful in conveying, even in a small degree, the great beauty of this department of our literature.

With regard to the short chapter on pre-Mahomedan literature, which is chiefly Buddhistic, I regret to say that I was not allowed access to the materials collected by Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Shastri in Nepal. The chief interest of this period is, however, linguistic and philological. When Mahamahopadhyay Shastri publishes an account of his researches in that field, the world will, I feel sure, learn many things that are not found in this book.

It is stated on page 89 that Nula Panchanan, the great authority on genealogical questions, lived a hundred and fifty years ago. This is not correct. I have lately discovered that he must have lived about three hundred years ago, since in his family the present is the tenth generation in descent from him.

On page 250 again, I have referred to the gentleman known as Hindu Stuart. The following additional particulars, taken from a book entitled "The Story of the Lal Bazar Baptist Church" by Edward J. Wenger (p. 508) may be of interest in connection with his tomb in the South Park Street cemetery.—"This tomb is that of Major General Charles Stuart, who died on the 31st March, 1828, aged 70 years. He is generally known as Hindu Stuart, because it is traditionally stated, that he became a Hindu and had his residence in Wood Street, Calcutta, full of idols. It is stated that Government refused to allow him to be cremated as a Hindu because of his position as a general officer of the British Army, so gave him a burial in this cemetery, but allowed his tomb to be constructed in the shape of a Hindu temple with emblems of idolatry all about its exterior. In itself it is a very curious-looking structure. Our interest in it lies more in the fact that he was one of the bitterest opponents of the missionaries in his day."

Ever since 1897 when my Bengali work on the History of Bengali Language and Literature first saw the light, I have been suffering from severe nervous ailments. I have never

since been fit for the strain of steady and continuous work. I had to work on the lectures that are contained in this book under severe and trying conditions. Twice during the progress of the book through the press, my condition created grave anxiety. In this state of health, I had to revise all the proofs myself, often including the first readings. I am not at all an expert proof-reader. This will account, though it may not be a sufficient excuse, for the many errors that will be found in the following pages. But the indulgent reader may find in the book, in spite of all its defects, the results of life-long devotion. There are many things in it which will, I am afraid, be of little interest to the European reader, but it has been my endeavour to make the work of some use to every scholar whose curiosity and interest may be roused in regard to the subject. So I have taken care not to omit any point, however trivial it may appear at first sight.

My esteemed friends Babu Kumud Bandhu Basu and Mr. C. S. Paterson of the Young Men's Christian Association, Calcutta, have very kindly looked through the pages of this book. I take this opportunity of conveying my grateful thanks to them. To another European friend also, whose name I am not permitted to mention, I am much indebted. As I still, however, had to make considerable additions and alterations even after these revisions, I alone am responsible for the many defects of the work.

During the long years of my research in the field of old Bengali Literature, I have had the esteemed patronage and help of many European and Indian gentlemen, foremost among whom I may mention the names of Dr. G. A. Grierson, C. I. E., Mr. F. H. Skrine, Mr. W. C. Macpherson, C.S.I., the Hon'ble Mr. R. T. Greer, C.S.I., Mr. B. C. Mitra, Mr. K. C. De, (I.C.S.), Mr. G. N. Tagore of Calcutta, their Highnesses the Maharajas of Mayurbhanja and Tippera, and the Hon'ble Maharaja of Cossimbazar. In the early years of my research I had obtained considerable help from Mahamahopadhyay Hara

Prasad Shastri. To these and to all others who have helped me in times of need, my heart goes forth in great esteem and gratitude. I am indebted to my friend Mr. Nagendra Nath Vasu for allowing me the use of his valuable library of old Bengali manuscripts and helping me with suggestions, and also to Mr. Abanindra Nath Tagore for lending me some of the panels with old paintings, which have been reproduced in this book.

Before I conclude, I owe it to myself to offer my special thanks to that great friend and patron of Bengali literature, the Hon'ble Justice Asutosh Mookerjee, Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, to whose ardent sympathy and unwearied efforts our language owes its present firm footing in this University. It is to his constant encouragement that these lectures owe their origin and completion. If I have been able even in a small measure to prove myself worthy of his distinguished patronage, I shall consider my labours amply rewarded. In the Convocation address delivered by him on the 13th March, 1909, he made the following kind and appreciative reference to my lectures: "We have had a long series of luminous lectures from one of our own graduates Babu Dinesh Chandra Sen, on the fascinating subject of the history of the Bengali Language and Literature. These lectures take a comprehensive view of the development of our vernacular, and their publication will unquestionably facilitate the historical investigation of the origin of the vernacular literature of this country, the study of which is avowedly one of the foremost objects of the new Regulations to promote."

19, KANTA PUKUR LANE,
Bagbazar, Calcutta.

DINESH CHANDRA SEN

Note to the Second Edition
of
HISTORY OF BENGALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The author corrected, revised and enlarged the second edition when he sent the MSS. to the press towards the end of 1938. He lived to correct the first hundred pages of the proofs, and after his death in November, 1939, the work of seeing the book through the press fell upon his third son, Dr. Benoychandra Sen. On completion of the printing, the index was prepared by the author's eldest son, Sri Kiranchandra Sen.

The extraordinary delay in the publication of the book would require explanation but it would not be profitable to go into the various causes which lay behind the circumstance. For several years the War and the scarcity of paper held up the work of printing and the University Press had often to attend to business of a more urgent nature. A second edition, even of a famous book like this History, is not entitled to priority in times of emergency. There were other and private reasons, one of which was the absence of Dr. Benoychandra Sen from India for about a year.

One point calls for explanation which should be given in some detail. This relates to the different ways in which the name of a place or person has often been spelt in this book. The author did not use diacritical marks and the rough phonetic equivalents were preferred to their more scientific rendering in English. The reason was that he did not wish his 'History' to have a technical look. Once such freedom in rendering is adopted, no uniform standard in spelling can be maintained. The fact that some irregularity in spelling the proper nouns had crept in escaped attention until some progress in printing had been made and it was then too late to enforce a rigid system.

This difference in spelling is not likely to cause any serious inconvenience.

The 'History of Bengali Language and Literature' is a pioneer study, and although first published nearly half a century ago, its value as a work of literary history and criticism, and a survey of the genius and the spirit of the Bengali people remains undiminished.

The original plates from which the blocks were made being unfortunately lost, this edition is printed without illustrations.

S. S.

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HISTORY

OF

BENGALI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

CHAPTER I

Early Influences on the Bengali Language

Aryan Settlement in Bengal.

Bengal was one of the ancient centres of Aryan settlement in India. The prehistoric kingdom of Pragjyotish, which extended from modern Jalpaiguri to the backwoods of Assam, was one of the earliest Aryan colonies in this country. 'Vanga' is mentioned in the Aitareya Aranyaka* and frequent references to this land are found in the great epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. According to Manu, Bengal formed a part of the Aryyavarta.† The two great heroes of the Dwapar yug, who are said to have been the sworn enemies of Sri Krishna, the great upholder of Brahmanic power, were (1) Jarasandha, the King of Magadh and (2) Poundra Vasudev, ‡ the King of Pandua in Bengal, and both of them led expeditions to Dwaraka to subvert the power of Krishna.

It appears that in the age of the great epic—the Mahabharata—not only the two monarchs mentioned above, but also many

* Aitareya Aranyaka, 2. 1. 1.

† আসমুদ্রাত্তু বৈ পূর্ব্বাদাসমুদ্রাত্তু পশ্চিমাৎ।
তয়োরেবান্তরং গির্য্যোরার্য্যাবর্ত্তং বিদুর্বুধাঃ॥—Manu.

‡ See Harivamsa, Bhavisya Parva, Chap. 19.

other great warriors of Bengal, such as Madhu, Mur and Narak, fought hard battles against Krishna. They were all killed by Krishna and their great warfares against him are mentioned in many Puranas, especially in Harivamsa. In the age of the epic the cult of Krishna could not make any advance in Eastern India where he was not probably accepted as an Avatar.

From recent discoveries it appears that Bengal was a centre of Vedic religion in ancient times. Mr. K. N. Dikshit has recently discovered copper-plates with inscriptions in Brahmi characters from Baugram and other places, which prove that there were many Vedic Brahmans in Bengal who got endowments of lands from the Rajas of other provinces and left Bengal and settled in different places. Mr. Dikshit has also proved that the far-famed Buddhist town, Sravastipur, was located in the District of Bogra. Dr. Bibhuti Bhusan Dutt and Sj. Jagadishwaram have indicated by their recent investigations that thousands of Vedic Brahmans left Bengal and settled in the up-country and even in the Deccan in a remote age. Taking all these facts into consideration, we are led to the conclusion that owing to the enthusiasm of some of the early Pal Kings for pushing the Buddhistic propaganda and stopping Yajna and other religious rites of the Hindus, a large section of the Brahmans of Bengal left their mother-country for ever. For a detailed account of these I refer the readers to my *Brihat Banga* (pp. 71, 88 and 89).

The curse interdicting Bengal and other eastern countries ruled by the Buddhists probably was pronounced by these discontented Brahmans. Yet in the curse itself there is a mention of the existence of ancient Brahmanic shrines in this land.

Thus the once-favoured seat of the Vedic religion became void of Brahmans versed in Vedic lore, till in a later age, during the time of the Sen Kings of Bengal, Brahmans had to be recruited from Kanauj and other places for performance of Yajna rites.

Scholars have recently discovered that the Boro Buddor temple of Java followed the sculptural design of the Som Bihar of Paharpur in Northern Bengal. The Paharpur monastery was founded

much earlier than the great Java temple, and it has been conclusively proved that the latter's plan of structure followed closely the model of the Paharpur Vihar. No other Indian temple or building shows an affinity to or resemblance with the plan of the Java temple. The arts, sculpture and even literature of the Javanese are distinctly East Indian in character and proofs are forthcoming every year to show that Bengal, a part of which was included in Kalinga during the rule of the Ganga kings and even earlier, had a great hand in spreading Indian culture in the islands of the Indian archipelago. The Tibetan work, *Pag Sham Jam* (11th century), says that in the field of art Bengal occupied the first position, next Mewar and Tibet, and Chinese art is the last in the list. The more the history of China, Burma, Tibet, Nepal and of the far-off eastern islands is explored, the greater evidence is likely to be forthcoming to prove the enterprising march of the Bengalis outside their own province and in the southern seas and the triumphant success they achieved in propounding their art and literature abroad.

Buddhistic and Jain influences.

This land has, from very early times, been the cradle of popular movements in religion. The Buddhists and the Jains had, at one time, converted nearly the whole population of Bengal to their new creeds, and the Brahmanic influence was for centuries at a very low ebb here. Some of the greatest Buddhist scholars and reformers of India were born in Bengal, among whom the names of Atisa Dipankar (born 980 A.D.) and Silabhadra are known throughout the Buddhistic world. Santarakshit, the renowned High Priest of the monastery of Nalanda and a native of Gauda, spent many years of his life in Tibet on a religious mission, and an illustrious band of Bengalis, within the first few centuries of the Christian era, travelled to China, Korea and Japan, carrying there the light of the Buddhist religion. The scriptures of the Japanese priests are still written in characters approaching Bengali of the 11th century.*

* In the Horiuzi temple of Japan, the manuscript of a Buddhistic work, entitled **Usnisa Vijay Dharini**, is found written in Bengali characters. A facsimile of this is now in the

and ণ change into ল and ন, and য is pronounced as জ, and of শ, ষ, স, one form only is found in current use. These are, generally speaking, the characteristic features of spoken Bengali up to this day and our old manuscripts are full of examples of them. The reasons which made Krishna Pandit give our language the contemptuous name of Paisachi Prakrita, are not far to seek. It is the same that made Manu* condemn all contact with this land. The dialect of the Buddhist people, in which the Buddhist priests were writing books, could not be accepted by the Sanskritic school which arose with the revival of Hinduism.

Earliest Bengali works by the Buddhists.

Several works written in the tenth and the eleventh century of the Christian era, in a very old form of Bengali, have lately been discovered by Mahamahopadhyay Hara Prasad Sastri in Nepal. They appear to be but poor fragments of a literature which owed its origin chiefly to the earnestness of the Tantrika Buddhists for popularizing their creed. Though these specimens have now been nearly all lost, we hope some portion of them may yet be recovered by careful research carried into the literary archives of Nepal and Chittagong, the present resorts of Buddhism in Eastern India.

Revival of Hinduism.

This effort on the part of the Buddhists to raise Bengali to the status of a written language, however, came suddenly to a standstill on the revival of Hinduism in Bengal. Buddhist works were carried away to Nepal and Burma by the vanquished exponents of that faith ; and all traces of the creed, which was once ascendant in the country, were obliterated there. Whatever may be urged in favour of the theory of " the gradual, almost insensible, assimilation of Buddhism to Hinduism," there can be no doubt that Buddhism was often suppressed in India by a storm of Brahmanic persecution. The following extract from *Sankara-Vijaya* regarding King

* Manu lived in a prehistoric age, but as the laws of that sage are no longer to be found in the form in which they originally existed, our remarks apply to their modified version given in the modern **Bhrigusamhita**, which belongs to a much later period.

Sudhanva will show the ruthless manner in which the Buddhists and Jains were sometimes persecuted :—

" দুষ্টমতাবলম্বিনঃ বৌদ্ধান্ জৈনানসংখ্যাতান্ রাজমুখ্যাননেকবিদ্যাপ্রসঙ্গৈর্নিজিত্য তেষাং শীর্ষাণি পরশুভিশ্ছিত্বা বহূন্ উদূখলেষু নিক্ষিপ্য কটভ্রমর্যৈশ্চূর্ণীকৃত্য চৈবং দুষ্টমতধ্বংসমাচরন্ নির্ভয়ো বর্ত্ততে।"

" Many of the chief princes, professing the wicked doctrines of the Buddhist and the Jain religion, were vanquished in various scholarly controversies. Their heads were then cut off with axes, thrown into mortars, and broken to pieces (reduced to powder) by means of pestles. So these wicked doctrines were thoroughly annihilated, and the country made free from danger."

Progress of our language retarded.

With the decadence of the power of the Buddhist priests, who, in their zeal to popularize their creed, had not considered Bengali as an unworthy medium for propagating their religious views, Bengali lost the patronage which it had secured of the lettered men of the country—and its future seemed dismal and uncheerful. We have shown that the form of Prakrita prevalent in Bengal was out of favour with the Sanskritic school which gave it a contemptuous epithet. Sanskrit scholars, who brought about a revival of Hinduism in Bengal, were imbued with a taste for the hard and fast rules of classical Sanskrit grammar, and had an unmixed abhorrence for the laxities of Prakrita adopted by the Buddhists. Bengali seemed to have no prospects with such scholars: nay, they zealously opposed the efforts of those who tried to help the Vernacular of the country to assert its claim as a written language. The following well-known Sanskrit couplet bears testimony to their ill-will :—

" অষ্টাদশপুরাণানি রামস্য চরিতানি চ।
ভাষায়াং মানবঃ শ্রুত্বা রৌরবং নরকং ব্রজেৎ॥"

" If a person hears the stories of the eighteen Puranas or of the Ramayana recited in Bengali, he will be thrown into the hell called the Rourava."

No Bengalee could possibly have shown such a contempt for his mother-tongue. It is those Brahmans who came from Kanauj and elsewhere, who despised our language in this vile manner.

There is a corresponding Bengali couplet which is also well-known :—

" কৃত্তিবেসে, কাশীদেসে, আর বামুনবেঁসে,
এই তিন সর্ব্বনেশে ."

" Krittivas (Bengali translator of the Ramayana), Kasidas (Bengali translator of the Mahabharata) and those who aspire to mix with the Brahmans too closely, are the greatest of evil-doers."

It was no doubt composed by the descendants of Kanauj Brahmans.

In the famous controversy which Raja Rammohan Roy had with the orthodox Pandits, he had frequently to explain his conduct in regard to his publication of Bengali translations of the Sanskrit scriptures, which, according to those Brahmans, were sacrilegious. This shows that even as late as the early part of the 19th century, when Bengali had reached a high stage of development, it was looked down upon by the orthodox Brahmans.

Our readers are likely to conclude from the above, that the Brahmans were jealous of the gradual development of Bengali and its recognition as a written language. They wanted all truths of their religion to be locked up in the Sanskrit texts ; any attempt to promulgate them through the vehicle of a popular dialect, meant a loss of the great power which they had monopolized ; and they thus looked upon all such movements to enrich the Bengali language, with jealousy and distrust. But it admits of another explanation also, which is perhaps the right one. The Brahmanic school probably suspected that the hunters after cheap popularity, who adopted Bengali for conveying the truths of the Brahmanic religion, would not keep intact the purity of their spiritual ideal, and that the truths, so dearly prized by them, would be sullied in the provincial versions of the great Sanskrit works.

They, therefore, decried all efforts to popularize the Sastras by compiling Bengali translations. Added to this was their contempt for Bengali which was one of the most lax forms of the Ardha-magadhi Prakrita. Not only did the Sanskrit-knowing people hold the Vernacular of the country in disfavour, but even the writers of Bengali themselves had no high opinion of its resources. We frequently come across such lines in old Bengali works as "Naturally Bengali poems are faulty" (Vijay Gupta),* "Not fit to be discussed in a vernacular poem" (Kavindra) †—implying that Bengali was quite an unfit medium for conveying any serious or high thought.

How could Bengali obtain favour in the Hindu Courts?

The question is: How could the poor Vernacular of Bengal find recognition in the courts of the Kings, inspite of this opposition of the Brahmans? Every Hindu court gloried in keeping a number of Sanskrit scholars attached to it. From the time of Vikram-aditya it grew to be a fashion with Hindu Kings to keep learned companions, and they were generally picked men—finished masters in Sanskrit Poetry, Grammar and Logic—who revelled in the high-flown style and in the niceties of rhetoric which abound in the latter-day Sanskrit works, such as Kadamvari, Dasakumara Charita and Sri Harsha Charita. The copper-plate inscriptions of the Pal and Sen Kings of Bengal bear abundant proofs of the learning and poetical powers of some of these gifted men, whose contempt for Bengali was as great as was their scholarship in Sanskrit. How can we account for the fact that the court of Krishnachandra of Navadwipa—a glorious seat of Sanskrit learning, where Hariram Tarkasiddhanta, Krishnananda Vachaspati and Ramgopal Sarbabhoum were the professors of logic, where Vaneswar Vidyalankar won his laurels in Sanskrit poetry and Sivaram Vachaspati, Ramballabh Vidyavagis and Vireswar

* "সহজে পাঁচালী গীত নানা দোষময়"—Vijay

† পাঁচালীতে নহে যোগ্যবাণ।—Kavindra Parameswar.

Nyayapanchanan discoursed on philosophy—such a distinguished seat of classical learning as Krishnachandra's court—could bestow its favours and titles on Bharatchandra and Ramprasad, the Bengali poets of the eighteenth century? Not only Krishnachandra but many other Rajas and Chiefs of Bengal, who preceded him, are described as having extended their patronage and favour to the early Bengali poets. Their courts were guided by Sanskrit-knowing Pandits, and how are we to reconcile the fact that these Brahmans welcomed the poor *patois*, the despicable Paisachi Prakrita of Bengal, for which they had hitherto had only a feeling of unmixed contempt ?

Bengali favoured by Moslem Chiefs.

This elevation of Bengali to a literary status was brought about by several influences, of which the Mohammadan conquest was undoubtedly one of the foremost. If the Hindu Kings had continued to enjoy independence, Bengali would scarcely have got an opportunity to find its way into the courts of Kings.

The Pathans occupied Bengal early in the thirteenth century. They came from a great distance—from Bulkh, Oxus or Transoxina, but they settled in the plains of Bengal and had no mind to return to their mountainous home. The Pathan Emperors learned Bengali and lived in close touch with the teeming Hindu population whom they were called upon to rule. The minarets and cupolas of their mosques rose to the sky, adjoining the spires and tridents of the Hindu temples. The sounds of the conch-shells and bells emanating from the latter were heard while the newcomers assembled in the mosques to say their evening prayers. The pompous processions and the religious rites of the Hindus—their Durgapuja, Ras and Dolotsav—displayed a religious enthusiasm which equalled their own, while celebrating the Moharram, Id, Sabebarat and other festivals. The Emperors heard of the far-reaching fame of the Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and observed the wonderful influence which these exercised in moulding the religious and domestic life of the Hindus, and they naturally felt a desire to be acquainted with the

contents of those poems. The Pathan Emperors and Chiefs could not have the great patience of the Hindu Kings who were inspired by a religious zeal to hear the Brahman scholars recite Sanskrit texts and their learned annotations, step by step, requiring the listeners many long years to complete a course of lectures on the Ramayana or the Mahabharata. They appointed scholars to translate these works into Bengali which they now spoke and understood. The first Bengali translation of the Mahabharata of which we hear, was undertaken at the order of Nasir Shah, the Emperor of Gauda who ruled for 40 years till 1325 A.D. This translation has not yet been recovered, but we find mention of it in another translation of the epic made by Kavindra Parameswar, at the command of Paragal Khan, the Governor of Chittagong. Nasir Shah was a great patron of the language of this country. The poet Vidyapati dedicates one of his songs to this monarch * and, in another, speaks with high respect of Sultan Ghiasuddin.†

The name of the Emperor of Gauda, who appointed Krittivas to translate the Ramayana, is not known with certainty. He might be Raja Ganesh Narayan or a Moslem Sultan, but even if he was a Hindu King, there are abundant proofs to show that his court was stamped with Moslem influence. Emperor Husain Shah was a great patron of Bengali. Maladhar Vasu, a native of Kulingram, was employed by Emperor Shamshuddin Yusuf Shah to translate the Bhagavata into Bengali, and after two chapters of this work had been translated by him, in 1480 A.D., the Emperor was pleased to confer on him the title of Gunaraj Khan. We have already referred to a translation of the Mahabharata made by

* সো নসিরা সাহ জানে। বাক হানিল মদন বানে—চিরজীব রহু পঞ্চ গৌড়েশ্বর, কবি বিদ্যাপতি ভাণে।

"Nasira Shah knows it well, whom Cupid pierced with his dart: the poet Vidyapati says—Long live the Emperor of the Five Indies!"

† "প্রভু গয়াসুদ্দিন সুলতান"—Vidyapati.

Kavindra Parameswar at the behest of Paragal Khan. This Paragal Khan was a general of Husain Shah, deputed by him to conquer Chittagong. Frequent references are found in old Bengali literature, indicating the esteem and trust in which the Emperor Husain Shah was held by the Hindus.* Kavindra Parameswar had translated the Mahabharata up to the Striparva, and Chhuti Khan, son of Paragal Khan, who had succeeded his father in the Governorship of Chittagong, employed another poet named Srikaran Nandi for translating the Asvamedh Parva of that epic. Srikaran Nandi s translation has lately been published by the Sahitya Parishad of Calcutta. Poet Alaol, who lived about the middle of the seventeenth century, translated a Hindi work entitled Padmavat by Mir Mohammad in a highly Sanskritised Bengali at the command of Magan Thakur, a Mohammadan minister of the court of the Chief of Aracan. It should be noted here that there are many instances where Mohammadans adopted Hindu names and so the name Magan Thakur should not lead us to mistake him for a Hindu. Alaol was also employed by the Moslem Chief Solaiman, to translate a Persian work into Bengali. Instances of a like nature, where Mohammadan Emperors and Chiefs initiated and patronised translations of Sanskrit and Persian works into Bengali, are numerous, and we are led to believe that, when the powerful Moslem Sovereigns of Bengal granted this recognition to the Bengali language in their courts, Hindu Rajas also naturally followed suit. The Brahmans could not resist the influence of this high patronage; they were, therefore, compelled to favour the

* (১) সনাতন হুসেন সাহ নৃপতি-তিলক।

Padma Puran by Vijay Gupta.

(২) নৃপতি হুসেন সাহ হয় মহামতি।
পঞ্চম গৌড়েতে যার পরম সুখ্যাতি॥

Mahabharat by Kabindra.

(৩) শ্রীযুত হুসন, জগত ভূষণ, সেহ এহি রস জান।

Song by Vacoraja Khan.

language they had hated so much, and latterly they themselves came forward to write poems and compile works of translation in Bengali. From the account contained in some of the early Bengali works of translation, we can see how court patronage was accorded to the Bengali poets. When the shades of twilight settled on the dark green clumps of shrubby trees on the far Sonamura ranges, Paragal Khan, the Governor, used to call his ministers, attendants and courtiers every evening to his palace at Paragalpur in Feni, and before this illustrious audience, the translator of the Mahabharata had to recite portions from his poems—the Governor himself giving cheers in appreciation of beautiful and interesting passages. The poet flattered his noble patron by calling him an incarnation of Hari in Kaliyuga* and it is curious to note that the Pathan Chief, who was a devout Mohammadan, enjoyed this compliment of the Hindu poet and did not take it as an affront.

Hindu Rajas follow the example.

Thus the appointment of Bengali poets to the courts of Hindu Rajas grew to be a fashion after the example of the Moslem Chiefs, and we find most of the works of our best poets dedicated to the kings and noblemen who patronised them. Thus the works of Vidyapati, the Maithil poet, are inseparably associated with Shiva Simha and other sovereigns of Mithila. Mukundaram, the immortal author of Chandi had for his patron Bankura Rai, the Raja of Arah-Brahmanbhumi. Rameshvar, who wrote the *Shivayan*, enjoyed the patronage of Yashovanta Simha, Raja of Karnagad. Ghanaram, the author of *Dharmamangal*, was the recipient of many favours from Kirttichandra, the Raja of Burdwan—and who can think of the poet Bharatchandra without remembering his great friend and patron Krishnachandra of Navadwip? Raja Jaychandra employed the poet Bhabani Das for compiling a translation of the Ramayana; and many other classical Sanskrit works were translated into Bengali under the

* "কলিকালে হবু যেন কৃষ্ণ অবতার।"

auspices of the Kings of Tippera. We shall dwell upon all these works in their proper places hereafter.

We now confidently presume that the above proofs will be held sufficient to support the view that the patronage and favour of the Mohammadan Emperors and Chiefs gave the first start towards recognition of Bengali in the courts of the Hindu Rajas and to establish its claims on the attention of scholars. It is curious to observe that, more than once in history, we have owed the development of our language to the influence of foreign people, from whom such help was the least expected. Nathaniel Prassy Halhed, a European member of the Indian Civil Service, wrote the earliest Bengali grammar for us in the eighteenth century; and Bengali prose, in our own days, owes a good deal to the impetus given to it by the European missionaries.

Other causes.

The other causes, which contributed to a rapid development of Bengali during the Mohammadan period, were—

(*a*) The revival of Hinduism, which we have in this book called the Pauranic Renaissance.

(*b*) The great Vaishnava movement in Bengal in the sixteenth century.

I have come across some materials brought to light by my old pupil Dr. Enamul Haq from Aracan which clearly show that Bengali was favoured in the courts of the Hindu and Buddhist Rajas of Bengal prior to the Renaissance when Brahmans came from Kanauj and other places. Some of the records and inscriptions found in the archives of old palaces and mansions in Tippera and other Eastern districts show that Bengali was called '*Subhasha*' or refined language in those places, where it enjoyed a high favour amongst the people. Bengali, it seems, was marching eastward and was adopted not only in Assam but further east in the borders of the Nafa, Suvarnarekha and other rivers in Aracan, while towards the west it advanced to the hilly district of Ranchi where the Mundas used to sing the songs of Bengali Vaishnava

masters. But at the present day its scope is being gradually restricted. In Orissa Bengali and Oriya characters were the same in the 14th century, and their literary language also did not show any marked difference. But of late there has been a perceptible movement obstructing the natural process of absorption, and this unnatural movement is accentuated in the present day by provincial estrangements. The Bengalis living in Behar have been deprived of facilities to study their own language whereas large movements for supporting the Hindi propaganda are on foot. It is likely that a large section of Bengalis, living outside their own country, may in course of time forget their mother-tongue and adopt the language of the neighbouring provinces. Assamese has unjustly and cruelly been alienated from Bengali. This action was vehemently protested against by the then learned Inspector of Schools, Mr. Robertson, about a hundred years ago. The progressive march of Bengali to further east is now a thing of the past. One Mohammadan writer of considerable talent and scholarship hailing from Chittagong, who compiled several classical Bengali poems for the people of Aracan in the 17th century, strongly condemned those who, though born in the soil of Bengal, showed antipathy towards their mother-tongue. He said that such people should leave the country and settle elsewhere.

The Brahmans who came from Kanauj and became the leaders of the Hindu community could have no natural liking for Bengali which appeared to them as jargon and the offspring of Paishachi, a Prakrit spoken by evil spirits. These orthodox Brahmans bitterly opposed the movement to translate the scriptures into Bengali. As a result of their injunctions, written Bengali could not thrive or get any recognition in the Hindu courts in the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries. But Mohammadan rulers had no such scruple and stuck to the custom of old times and encouraged translations of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian works into Bengali. The Kings and Chiefs of Aracan, mostly Mohammadans, were great supporters of Bengali, and Mohammedan scholars of their courts were zealous exponents of our tongue from the 16th to the 18th century.

That Bengali undoubtedly occupied the first place in India as literary and spoken language was admitted by Carey, Marshman, Ward and other distinguished linguists in the 18th century. Carey, who was a master of 11 vernaculars of our country, distinctly refers to the intrinsic merits of Bengali and declares that it undoubtedly occupies the foremost position amongst all the languages of India. Yet at the time when this remark was made, neither Michael nor Bankim nor Rabindra Nath had begun to write in Bengali.

Now when we are elated at the thought that one of the Bengali newspapers claims nearly sixty thousand subscribers—a figure not equalled by any other English or Vernacular newspaper in India—when we wonder at the unapproachable height of Tagore's fame with pride and revel at the prospect of the literature of Bengal gradually extending its scope and field of work, the more thoughtful people of this country are naturally alarmed at the probable result of the forces set in motion to thwart the progress of Bengali. Provincial jealousy and racial vanities have stood to narrow the scope of our language, and the political redistribution of Bengal for administrative purposes is aiding the hostile movements. Bengal, alas! is poor and has not the enormous pecuniary resources of the sister provinces supported by the Local Governments to face the situation.

CHAPTER II

Pre-Mohammadan Literature

1. Rural aphorisms and wise sayings : Dak and Khana, 17. 2. Dharma-cult—a form of Buddhism, 30. 3. Ramai Pandit and his Shunya-Puran, 34. 4. Sahajiya-cult and its exponents, 43. 5. The Buddhist Dohas, 51. 6. Dharma-mangal poems and the story related in them, 62. 7. The ballads and songs in honour of the Pal Kings and the local Rajas, 67. 8. Shaiva-cult—how it faced Buddhism, 75. 9. Genealogical records, 83.

Before dealing with the literature of Bengal that grew up after the Mohammadan conquest, we propose to dwell here upon the fragments of literary works which have come down to us—from a much earlier period. They consist of (1) Aphorisms and pithy sayings which served as a guide for domestic and agricultural purposes to the rural folk of Bengal ; (2) Hand-books of mystic doctrines, based on Tantrik forms of Buddhism ; (3) Ballads and songs in honour of some of the Rajas and Chiefs of Bengal ; (4) Hymns, odes and songs describing the prowess of Dharma-Thakur and other domestic deities ; (5) Genealogical accounts of the Kulin families of Bengal.

1. Aphorisms and Wise Sayings : Dak and Khana

Daker Bachan.

Referring to the earliest literature of Bengal, which bears the stamp of Buddhistic influence, we light upon *Dak-Tantra*, a Tantrik work of the Buddhists, containing aphorisms and wise sayings in old Bengali regarding agriculture, astrology, medicine and other matters of interest for the domestic life. *Daker Bachan* gives specimens of a very old form of Bengali which may be traced to the tenth century of the Christian era. Dak-Tantra is also a book of authority with the rural folk of Bengal, but it is popularly known here as "Daker Bachan." The latter work gives a smoothed down version of its precursor and prototype preserved in Assam and other

places; but there are numerous lines to be found in the editions of the book published by the Bat-tala Presses of Calcutta* which retain their old and antiquated forms. It is impossible to get any clear sense out of such lines as :—

" আদি অন্ত ভুজসি।
ইষ্টদেবে যেহ পুজসি॥
বুন্দা বুঝিয়া এড়িব লুণ্ড।
আগল হৈলে নিবারিব তুণ্ড॥
আনহি বসতি আনহি গোয়ালি।
হেন বসতের কি বাউলি॥
ভাষা বোল পাতে লিখি।
বাটাহব বোল পাড়ি সাখি॥
মধ্যস্থে যবে সমাধে ঝাঝ।
বলে ডাক বড় দুখ পায়॥
মধ্যস্থে যবে হেমাতি বুঝে।
বলে ডাক নরকে পচে॥"

Probably the last portion refers to the rules for settling disputes by arbitration—a practice generally followed in the old order of society. There are evident traces of Buddhistic views in these sayings. Buddhism, in its days of decline in India, became identical with scepticism in popular opinion. In *Daker Bachan*, we come across such views as these: " When we get a good and palatable thing to eat, it is not wise to keep it for to-morrow. Enjoy curds and milk; if they bring on disease, get it cured by medicine. For, says Dak, when one dies, there is an end of his connection with the world."† This

Buddhistic views.

* Published by Beni Madhab De & Co., 318, Upper Chitpore Road, Bat-tala, Calcutta.

† "ভাল দ্রব্য যখন পাব।
কালিকারে তুলিয়া না খোব।
দধি দুগ্ধ করিয়া ভোগ।
ঔষধ দিয়া খণ্ডাব রোগ॥
বলে ডাক এই সংসার।
আপনে মইলে কিসের আর॥"

is quite a non-Hindu idea. The pleasures of the present moment are discarded by the Hindu Shastras and the views quoted above remind us of Charvaka and other free-thinkers, and as we have said the Buddhists of the latter-day school had turned into free-thinkers like Charvaka. The Buddhistic Dharma Shastra lays special stress on charitable works. In the short epigrammatic sayings of Dak, there are many passages calling on a householder to perform works of charity and public good.

"One who is anxious to do a virtuous act, should dig tanks and plant trees (for the benefit of the people). One who founds institutions for the distribution of rice and water, never goes to Hell."*

We miss in these sayings the familiar injunctions for prayer and worship, indispensable in a book of rules for the guidance of a Hindu householder; and here we can draw a clear line of demarcation between the state of society before and after the revival of Hinduism in Bengal. All rules and codes framed for the guidance of men and women in our society, after the down-fall of Buddhism, have a distinct and unmistakable reference to the metaphysical side of religion. In them a far greater stress is laid on devotion to gods than on principles of morality. The Hindu priests even go so far as to declare that a man committing even the worst of sins may secure a place in Heaven by uttering the name of God a single time. The *Daker Bachan* evidently belongs to a period anterior to the acceptance of this code in society. The Assamese have claimed Dak as a native of Assam and there is a controversy on this point (dealt with in my *Typical Selections*, Vol. I, pp. 1-4).

* "ধর্ম্ম করিতেযবে জানি।
পাথরি দিয়া রাখিব পানি।
গাছ রুইলে বড় ধর্ম্ম।
* * *
যে দেই ভাতশালা পানিশালী।
সে না যায় যমের পুরী॥"

Daker Bachan is not the only book of its kind in old Bengali. *Khanar Bachan* furnishes an equally old specimen of our language. The latter is more popular with the masses and has, therefore, undergone far greater changes than *Daker Bachan*. We, however, often light upon old and antiquated forms of expressions in it, which remind us that, though simplified and altered, the sayings must also be traced to an early age. Though the subjects treated of in the two books cover a varied field, by far the greater portion of them is devoted to agricultural matters. In Bengal, where the people are chiefly of the peasant class, these sayings are accepted as a guide by millions; the wisdom they display is the result of acute observation of nature and has a special significance in regard to the soil and climate of Bengal. We quote some of them below* :—

Khanar Bachan.

The sayings are mainly devoted to agricultural subjects.

"If it rains in the month of Agrahayan, the king goes a-begging.

* "যদি বরে আগনে।
রাজা নামেন মাগনে॥
যদি বরে পৌষে।
কড়ি হয় তুষে॥
যদি বরে মাঘের শেষ।
ধন্য রাজার পুণ্য দেশ॥
যদি বরে ফাল্গুনে।
চীনা কাঞ্চন হয় ত্রিগুণে॥"
"খনা ডেকে বলে যান।
রোদে ধান ছায়ায় পান॥"
"দিনে রোদ রাতে জল।
তাতে বাড়ে ধানের বল॥
কার্ত্তিকের উপ জলে।
খনা বলে ছনো ফলে॥"
"শুন বাপু চাষার বেটা।
বাঁশ ঝাড়ে দিও ধানের চিটা॥
চিটা দিলে বাঁশের গোড়ে।
দুই কুড়া ভুঁই বেড়বে ঝাড়ে॥"

" If it rains in the month of Poush, money may be had even by selling the chaff.

" If it rains at the end of the month of Magh, the king and his country become blessed.

" If it rains in Falgun, the millet Chinakaon (*Peanicum miliaceum*) grows abundantly."

"Khana says, the paddy thrives in the sun and the betel in the shade."

" If the paddy gets profuse sunshine by day, and showers by night, it rapidly develops. Khana says, the drizzling rain in the month of Kartik does immense good to the paddy."

" Hear, O son of ploughman, in the bamboo-bush put some smut of paddy; if you do so near the root of the shrubs, they will soon cover two Kudas of land (about 174 cubits square).

" O son of ploughman, plant *patol* (*Trichosanthes dicœca*) in a sandy soil, your expectations will be fulfilled."

" Sow the seeds of mustard close, but those of rye (*Sinapis ramose*) at some distance from one another. Cotton plants should be put at the distance of a leap from one another and jute should, by no means, be planted near them, for cotton plants will perish if they come in contact with the water from the jute-field."

There are numerous rules of this nature laid down on agricultural matters, with special application to the products of the soil of Bengal. The books serve to this day as infallible agricultural manuals to the ploughmen of Bengal. The short sentences

" শুনরে বাপু চাষার বেটা।
মাটির মধ্যে বেলে যেটা॥
তাতে যদি বুনিস পটোল।
তাতেই তোর আশার সফল॥"

" ঘন সরিষা পাতলা রাই।
নেঙ্গে নেঙ্গে কাপাস বাই॥
কাপাস বলে কোটা ভাই।
জাতি পানি যেন না পাই॥"

rhyming with one another are soon committed to memory ; so every child and every woman know them in rural Bengal.

On house-building

The following rule is enjoined for building a residential house :—

"On the east, let there be the ducks (*i.e.*, there should be a tank); on the west, an avenue of bamboos ; on the north, a garden of fruit trees; and the south should be left open." *

On the properties of plants and on the culinary art.

The chapter on medicine is not taken from any learned Sanskrit medical work. The indigenous plants and herbs of rural Bengal are prescribed as remedies, the effects of which seem to be infallible on the human system and were known by direct experiment. The discourse on the culinary art of Bengal in *Daker Bachan* has a particular interest to us, as it describes the simple but exceedingly delicious fare cooked by our village women. In plainness and delicacy of taste, these dishes bear a striking contrast to the rich preparations of meat introduced in later times by the Mohammadans.

There are many legendary tales current throughout this province, which connect Khana with Baraha-mihir, the famous Indian astrologer. The popular legends about Khana are wild and incredible. One of them says that Khana was the wife of Mihir, whom the legend represents as the son of Baraha. Baraha, it is said, was jealous of Khana's proficiency in Astrology and this eventually led him to order his son Mihir to kill his wife. After killing his wife, Mihir kept her head in a secure place but after a few days he found that a lizard had eaten up the tongue of the female prodigy. As a result the lizards as a class have since been endowed with prophetic powers. If a person on the eve of his leaving home hears the sound *Tik-tik* of the lizard, it is to be held as a warning that his journey would not be prosperous. There might have been in ancient times some one

* " পূবে হাঁস, পশ্চিমে বাঁশ।
উত্তরে বাগ, দক্ষিণে কাঁক॥"

of the name of Khana with outstanding astrological knowledge, to whom were ascribed through succeeding ages the ripe experience and observations of the people of Bengal in Agriculture and Astrology. The accumulated wisdom of the whole peasantry of this agricultural province sought an expression in these aphorisms. In the Barasat Sub-Division of Bengal there is a mound of earth full of antiquarian relics. This mound is said to be the ruins of the palace of an ancient king. Many legends about Khana and her proficiency in Agriculture and Astrology are current in the locality. It may be that in a later age this Khana came to be identified with a real or fabled heroine associated with the court of Vikramaditya.

Pandit Babuya Misra, a Lecturer of the Calcutta University, states that there are many aphorisms of Khana current in Darbhanga District. He says that some of these were copied three or four hundred years ago. Their language is Bengali. In the *Patanjali Mahabhashya* (3rd century B.C.) and even in *Brihat Samhita* some Sanskrit formulæ bearing affinity with the Bengali sayings are to be found. They are also on Agriculture and Astrology. But there are some interesting points of difference. The aphorisms of Khana have a special bearing upon the climatic conditions and soil of Bengal and are distinctly indigenous in character, whereas the Sanskrit sayings are more general and scarcely deal with the peculiar characteristics of Bengal.

Whether there was a historical woman named Khana in the time of the good king Vikramaditya, or there was some other woman of that name, proficient in Astrology, who lived in the Barasat Sub-Division in a remote age, it is sure that this figure is now lost in the mist of age-long superstitions and obscure traditions, but the fact seems to be that the agricultural people of Bengal have from age to age contributed to these aphorisms which now pass under the real or fabled name of Khana and given them their present shape. Unfortunately, no systematic attempts have been made to collect and preserve them.

It should be noted here that by peasantry I do not mean merely Bengalis of the lower order. Agriculture was the means

of livelihood of all Bengalis in the past, irrespective of social position. The difference between the higher and the lower castes was not great in those days. Even the Brahmans did not feel any scruple in driving the plough with their hands for the cultivation of their fields, though in the Hindu Jurisprudence a Brahman is sometimes prohibited from adopting the plough for tilling lands as a calling. This spirit probably arose from the Buddhistic feelings of reluctance to hurt any animal. Such passages might have been interpolated in later times. This is, however, not the place where this vexed question should be attempted to be solved. In the Chandi-Kabya (poem on Chandi) by Mukundaram, written in the year 1574 A.D., the poet says that, though his ancestry was to be traced from Tapan Ojah, a Raja of *Karuri* Brahmin family, the forefathers of the poet up to 6th or 7th generation tilled their own lands with the plough; this takes us about three centuries back, to the 13th century, when a high caste Brahman did not think it to be beneath his dignity to drive the plough for cultivation. Instances of Brahmans adopting the agricultural profession may be multiplied. Mukundaram was a highly gifted poet, versed in Shastric lore and a private tutor to a prince, yet he did not feel any hesitancy in recounting such humble work as an occupation of his ancestors.

I mean to imply by this reference that the sayings were not composed by illiterate peasantry alone. Even people of high rank and scholarship probably contributed the result of their observations to this stock of popular wisdom.

People of Bengal are keen observers of nature, and they did not throw their observation into the background even when their scholarship was great. There are many aphorisms in this agricultural and astrological manual ascribed to Khana, which discriminate auspicious hours from inauspicious and describe the ill omens believed in by the people. But suddenly we come across very contrary elements—the prophet tears off all bondage to superstition, showing the inner strength of a person whose cultural scope is free and unsophisticated.

Here are some wise sayings of Khana :—

" রজক দেখ্‌বে যখন।
কাপড় ছাড়বে তখন
নাপিত দেখ্‌বে যখন
ক্ষৌরি হ'বে তখন॥
কিসের তিথি, কিসের বার।
লাফ দিয়ে হও গহিন পার॥
জল ভাল গঙ্গার জল।
বল বল বাহুবল॥
আর যত ভাবা দিশা।
খনার বিচারে বুদ্ধি-নাশা।"

In a preceding passage—" সোম শুক্র বেহে, কাপড় পর নেচে " (avoid Monday and Friday in wearing new clothes)—one's action is restrained by a specification of inauspicious days in the manual of Khana. Exception is taken to shaving on Sundays and Tuesdays, and many inauspicious days are mentioned for sea voyage.

The passage quoted above shows the other side of the picture and gives directions not to follow superstitious injunctions. Here we perceive the intellectual freedom of the masses, the parallel to which we may hardly expect to find in any other Indian province.

The above passage is translated as follows : " Whenever you find a washerman, you should make over your clothes to him without waiting for a consideration of auspicious time. Whenever you will (conveniently) find a barber, make yourself ready for shaving. As for undertaking a voyage, do not care for the injunctions, but unhesitatingly cross a river or sea whether the day is auspicious or not. If you have no vessel, try to cross the river by swimming." This means, exert your fullest strength and do not mind any superstitions or impediments, dictated by Astrologers. " No help is more reliable than self-help. All that Khana says in her astrological direction in the vernacular language clouds one's commonsense."

Such strength always lay in our people : while sometimes controlled by the restrictions of the astrological wisdom, the

"The hearth is in the kitchen, but the wife cooks meals outside, she swells her small tresses and ties them into a large knot, and frequently turns back her head (as if to see somebody). She empties the pitcher, and goes to the pond for refilling it, casts side-glances on the passers-by, and covertly glances at some stranger while talking with neighbours on the road, hums a tune while lighting the evening lamp. Such a woman should not be kept in the house." *

Baramasi or 'twelve months'—a favourite subject.

The sky of Bengal, clear and transparent in the early spring, foggy in winter, and full of frowning clouds and angry flashes of lightning in the rainy months, ever changing its aspect from month to month, cannot fail to strike a keen observer of nature with the clearly defined lines of its varied weather. The various seasons produce different results on the human system, on the paddy-fields, and on the variegated flowers and leaves of trees with which the villages abound. Life here changes, as it were, from month to month and nature picturesquely disports herself on the stage of this beautiful country through the twelve sub-divisions of the year. The "Baramasi" or a description of twelve months is a favourite subject with our old poets, who seem never to be weary of describing the peculiar pleasures and sorrows of each month. Here, in these two manuals, there are frequent references to the conditions of

* "ঘরে আখা বাইরে রান্ধে।
এক কেশ ফুলাইয়া বান্ধে॥
ঘন ঘন চাহে উলটি খাড়।
বলে ডাক এ গৃহিণীকে ঘর উজার॥
পানি ফেলিয়া পানিকে যায়।
পথিক দেখিয়া আড় চক্ষে চায়॥
বাতি বুলে গান গায়
পর পুরুষকে আড় চক্ষে চাহ॥
পর সম্ভাসে বাটে রহি।
এ নারী ঘরে না থুহি॥"

weather foretelling the prospects of paddy during each month of the year. Food, peculiarly congenial to the human system in each season and month, is detailed in *Daker Bachan* in strict accordance with the principles of health. I quote a portion below :—

"In the month of Kartik, take the esculent root *Ol* (*Arum campanulatum*). In Agrahayan the *Bel* fruit will prove congenial to health. In Poush, take *Kanji* (a kind of sour gruel made by steeping rice in water and letting the liquor ferment). In Magh, a free use of mustard oil is recommended. In Falgun take ginger and in Chaitra vegetables of a bitter taste (as Nim leaves) will do you good. In Vaishakh *Nalita* (a pot herb), in Jyaishtha butter milk, in Ashar curds, in Sravan *Khoi* (a kind of fried-grain), in Bhadra palm fruit, and in Ashwin cucumber. This is the Baramasi, says Dak."*

The later Baramasis, of which there is quite a legion in our old literature, are mainly devoted to tender feelings experienced by lovers in the different months of the year, especially when separated from one another.

The popularity of the two books is not approached by any other writings that we know of, in the country, as even illiterate men have got the aphorisms by heart, which have been handed down to us from a remote past—it may be the tenth century A.D. as we have already said and as appears from the language in which

The popularity of the sayings

* "কার্ত্তিকে ওল, মার্গে বেল।
পৌষে কাঞ্জি, মাঘে তেল॥
ফাল্গুনে আদা, চৈত্রে নিতা।
বৈশাখেতে নিম নালিতা॥
জ্যৈষ্ঠে ঘোল, আষাঢ়ে দহি।
শ্রাবণে খৈ, ভাদ্রে তাল
আশ্বিনে শশা।
ডাক বলে এই বার মাসা "

their older versions are couched and from the spirit of the age which is stamped upon them.

The question of authorship.

Our next point will be to discuss the authorship of these aphorisms. Khana is believed to be a historical personage. We have already referred to the legend that she was the reputed daughter-in-law of Varaha-mihira and a prodigy in Astronomy, in the days of Vikramaditya, the King of Ujjayini. Even accepting all these traditions about her to be true, it is absurd to suppose that she, a native of Rajputana, would compose the aphorisms in Bengali or dwell upon subjects which apply peculiarly to Bengal. The *Daker Bachan* has similarly been ascribed by popular belief to a milkman named Dak. In the Bhanita (signature) of these sayings, we occasionally come across the words "Dak goala" (Dak the milkman). In some of the sayings we find the Bhanita of Ravan. This exceedingly puerile notion is no doubt due to the belief amongst the people of this country that a knowledge of Astrology has come down to us from the Rakshasas. Ravan, the King of Rakshasas, was a saintly character among the Mahayana Buddhists. His great intellectual gifts are in evidence in the well-known work, *Lankavatar Sutra*. Scholars and saints like Dhamma-Kitti (10th century) have found fault with the Hindus for representing him as a vicious character. If these aphorisms were composed by the Buddhists, the colophon ascribing authorship to Ravan would admit of a partial justification. In spite of all these traditions, we are inclined to believe that these sayings contain the accumulated wisdom of the Bengal peasantry—they are the heritage of an agricultural race to which the unassuming rural folk of Bengal have unconsciously contributed through ages, and that no particular person or persons should be credited with their authorship.

2. Dharma-cult—a form of Buddhism

The Moslem conquerors often built mosques with the materials of the Hindu temples they had destroyed. The sculptura

representations of gods and goddesses and other carvings on bricks indicating the ancient decorative art of the Hindus have been lately discovered from dilapidated mosques in various places in India, as the plaster, which concealed them from view, crumbled down from the walls in course of time.

Buddhistic works recast by the Hindus.

Such has also been the case with Buddhism in India. In the Buddhist temples the image of Buddha is often worshipped as Shiva. Buddhistic religious books have been so recast and transformed by the Hindu priests that they now pass for religious poems of the Hindus in the eyes of the people. Yet they were unmistakably Buddhistic works at first. Such, for instance, are the poems of Dharmamangal. Dharma-Thakur, in praise of whose might the poems were originally composed, represents the popular idea of Buddha and occupies the second place in the Buddhistic group comprised of Buddha, Dharma and Samgha. The third of the group, সঙ্ঘ, changed into শঙ্খ, is also alluded to in the *Shunya-Puran* by Ramai Pandit.

He mystically discourses on শঙ্খ* which, however, is as remote from সঙ্ঘ as is the popular conception of Dharma-Thakur from

* "সংখে উপজিল সংখে সংখের বিচার।
কহ কহ পণ্ডিত সংখের সার॥
কোন সংখে জলে স্তান করেন অনাদ্য করতার।
আদ্য সংখে জলার জুতি॥
হরি হরি সংখে পাপ মুকতি॥
কোন সংখে না ছোঁএ পানি।
দখিন সংখে না ছোঁএ পানি॥
দখিন সংখে আপ পদ্মপানি।
কে সিরজিল গঙ্গা কে সিরজিল পদ্ম।
তাহে উপজিল দ্বাদশ অঙ্গুল সংখ।
হে জন্ম সঙ্ঘ হে বিজন্ম সঙ্ঘ তুমি সংখ হইএ চিরাই।
তুম্মার জলে স্তান করেন শ্রীধর্ম গোসাঞি॥"

Shunya-Puran, pp. 83-84.

that of the historical Buddha. There are passages which distinctly prove the Buddhistic origin of the poems. In the *Shunya-Puran*, which lays down rules for Dharma worship, there is a line—" ধর্ম্মরাজ যজ্ঞ নিন্দা করে " (Dharma Raj condemns sacrifices). This sounds like a translation of the well-known line in honour of Buddha by the poet Jayadev—" নিন্দসি যজ্ঞবিধেরহহ শ্রুতিজাতং " ।

Evidences of their Buddhistic origin

There are many other passages which clearly indicate the same truth, for instance, " সিংহলে শ্রীধর্ম্মরাজ বহুত সম্মান " (Dharma Raj is held in high veneration in Ceylon). In another line we find " আগেতে ছিলেন প্রভু ললিত অবতার " (In former times Dharma Raj was called the Lalita Avatar). The most authoritative biography of Buddha is called " Lalita Vistara."

The nation had forgotten the force and utility of the Samgha, the Buddhistic congregation of monks and, therefore, confused it with Shankha, the familiar shell sacred as a religious symbol of the Hindus.

In the poems of Dharmamangal itself, there are frequent references to Buddhist saints, such as Minanath, Gorakshanath, Hadipa and Kalupa. The words নিরঞ্জন and শূন্য মূর্ত্তি, with which the readers of the poems are so familiar, are words taken from the Buddhistic Shastras. The doctrine known as the Shunyabad, which explains the origin of the universe from nothing, became a popular theory with the later Buddhistic School; and this doctrine is detailed not only in the *Shunya-Puran*, but also in the poems of Dharmamangal. The Hadis, Doms and other low-caste people are the priests in many of the Dharma temples. The Dom Pandits at one time occupied a prominent position in the Buddhistic temples, and when Buddhism was driven away from this country, all religious functions in many of these Dharma temples still continued to be discharged by the descendants of the Dom priests, as the Hindus dared not oust a priestly class, revered by the people, from their duties in temples. We noticed that the poems in honour of Dharma-Thakur have been thoroughly recast by the Hindu priests, and Hindu ideas have been largely

introduced into them; but even as late as 1640 A.D. the Brahman priests would not venture to mix too closely with the worshippers of Dharma-Thakur for fear of losing caste. In the above year, when Manik Ram Ganguli, a Brahman, was inspired by Dharma-Thakur, who appeared to him in a dream for encouraging him to write a Dharmamangal, the poet fell prostrate before him in dismay, and said "জাতি যায় প্রভু যদি ইহা করি গান" (I shall be an outcast, if I sing a song in your praise). This distinctly proves that Dharma-Thakur had originally no place in the Hindu Pantheon.

The Brahmans gradually overcome their scruples.

As the popularity of these songs amongst the masses continued unabated, the Brahmans gradually took them up, and later poems of Dharma-mangal have been so greatly transformed in their hands, that they look very much like works devoted to the Shakta-cult; but reading between the lines, the readers will be able to discover evident traces of Buddhism in them. It should, however, be noted here that the Buddhism indicated in these works has scarcely anything in common with the pure Buddhism of Asoka's time; and both are even more unlike one another than the Pauranic Hindu religion of the present day and the pure religion of the Upanishads.

Early Bengali works by the Buddhists.

The *Shunya-Puran* by Ramai Pandit, *Charya-Pads* by Kahnapada, the poems known as *Dharma-mangal*, and ballads and songs in honour of some of the early Kings of Bengal bear distinct stamp of Buddhism on them. The ballads of the Pal Kings, who were great patrons of Buddhism, indicate the marvellous power wielded by Gorakshanath and Hadisiddha, the great Buddhistic saints. The latter belonged to one of the meanest castes of the Hindu society, yet his power is said to have been so great that the gods of Heaven trembled in fear, when the saint approached. In the songs of Govindachandra, revised by the poet Durlabh Mallik, the King is said to have asked his religious preceptor, the

far-famed Hadisiddha, as to what was the true religion. Hadisiddha said :—

" হাড়িপা বলেন বাছা শুন গোবিন্দাই।
অহিংসা পরম ধর্ম্ম যার পর নাই।"

(O Govinda, my son, the highest act of religion is to abstain from destruction of life.)

The popular notion of Buddhism in India holds this doctrine of অহিংসা as the most essential point in the religion of Buddha, about whom the poet Jayadev has said :—

" সদয়-হৃদয়-দর্শিত-পশুঘাতং।"

This form of Buddhism, popularly known as the Nath-cult, is a sort of compromise between the Shaiva cult and latter-day Buddhism.

3. Ramai Pandit and his "Shunya-Puran"

The great exponent of the Dharma-cult in Bengal was, by general acceptance, Ramai Pandit, the reputed author of *Shunya-Puran*. The poems of *Dharmamangal* also make mention of Ramai Pandit with great esteem. His hand-book of Dharma Puja, called the *Shunya-Puran*, was edited by Nagendranath Vasu and published by the Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta. Ramai Pandit was a contemporary of Dharmapal II, who reigned in Gaud in the early part of the 11th century A.D. Rajendra Chola's rock-inscription (1012 A.D.), discovered at Tirumalaya, probably makes mention of this monarch. Ramai Pandit was born at Champaighat on the river Dwarakeshwar in the District of Bankura. The year of his birth is not known, but he was born on the 5th day of the waxing moon, in the month of Baishakh, towards the end of the 10th century A.D.

Ramai Pandit born towards the end of the 10th century A.D.

Nagendranath Vasu, who edited the *Shunya-Puran*, accepted the account of Ramai's life furnished by his descendants, and took him to be a Brahman. The account is full of fables and is scarcely entitled to credence. The descendants of Ramai Pandit, who still

The question of his pedigree discussed.

discharge the priestly function in the Dharma temple at Maina, are known as Dom Pandits and not Brahmans; besides, there have been so many attempts in Bengal to raise a low-born saint to the rank and status of a Brahman, evidently with a view to removing the stigma of humble origin laid on his descendants, that we can hardly accept this account of interested parties as true. Haridas, the great saint of the Vaishnava community, was a Mohammadan, according to the accounts of the earliest of standard Vaishnava biography, the *Chaitanya Bhagabat*; but he is now declared by some Vaishnavas to have been originally a Brahman. Even in the accounts furnished from the temple of Maina by the descendants of Ramai Pandit, there are points to throw a doubt on the pretensions to a high pedigree advanced by them. Dharma-Thakur is therein said to have cursed Ramai, saying that the people of higher castes would not touch water given by the Saint. Ramai Pandit himself is said to have cursed his son Dharmadas for a fault, not clearly stated, by which he lost his caste and turned a Dom Pandit. These stories are evidently got up to establish the point that they were originally Brahmans, though so degraded now. The writer of the sketch emphatically states that Dom Pandits do not belong to the Dom caste. His very enthusiasm in establishing this point betrays the weakness of his position ; for the people of Bengal know Doms and Dom Pandits to belong to the same caste. The word দ্বিজ (twice-born), which occasionally occurs in the Bhanita of Ramai Pandit, is evidently a later interpolation, and the *Shunya-Puran*, in its present shape, bears traces of many subsequent hands, as Nagendranath Basu has himself admitted.

His descendants.

Ramai Pandit was eighty years old when he married. His son Dharmadas had four sons—Madhav, Sanatan, Sridhar and Trilochan. The members of Ramai Pandit's family are authorised priests of Yatrasiddhi Roy —as Dharma-Thakur of the temple at Maina is called—and they are privileged to perform the copper-ceremony of 36 castes.

The contents of the Shunya Puran

The *Shunya-Puran* begins with a description of the origin of the universe on the lines of the Mahayana School of the Buddhists. It runs thus* :—

"There was no line, no form, no colour, and no sign.

"The sun and the moon were not, nor day, nor night.

"The earth was not, nor water, nor sky.

"The mounts Meru, Mandara and Kailasa were not.

"The creation was not, nor were there gods, nor men.

"Brahma was not, nor was Vishnu, nor the ethereal regions.

"Heaven and earth were not—all was emptiness.

"The presiding gods of the ten directions were not, nor were there the clouds, nor the stars.

"Life was not, nor death, nor pangs of death.

"The Lord moved in the void, supporting Himself on the void."

From the Lord, says the *Shunya-Puran*, sprang air; and as He drew breath, Uluk (owl), a bird sacred to the worshippers of Dharma-Thakur, was created. The owl is also sometimes called a Muni (sage). The next creation was tortoise, which is also sacred to the Dharma-worshippers. In the temple dedicated to Dharma-Thakur by Lau Sen, King of Maina, in the 11th century A.D., Dharma is still worshipped as a tortoise. The other objects of creation were the serpent Ananta, and the earth; and then from the Lord came Shakti, known as Durga.

* "নহি রেক নহি রূপ নহি ছিল বর্ণ চিন।
রবি শশী নহি ছিল নহি ছিল রাতি দিন॥
নহি ছিল জল থল নহি ছিল আকাস।
মেরু মন্দার না ছিল না কৈলাস॥ 2
নহি ছিষ্টি ছিল আর নহি সুর নর।
বম্ভা বিষ্টু ন ছিল ন ছিল আঁবর॥ 7
সরগ মরত নহি ছিল সভি ধুন্দকার।
দসদিক পাল নহি মেঘ তারাগণ॥ 10
আউ মিত্ত্ না ছিল জমর তাড়ন॥ 13
সুহুত ভরমন পরভুর সুন্নে করি ভর॥"

Shunya-Puranas

We need not proceed further with this catalogue of theological reveries. The *Shunya-Puran* gives details about the method of worshipping Dharma. We find Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma and a host of Pauranic gods mentioned in this book in a strange way. They discharge functions which have little in common with those attributed to them by the Hindus. Occasionally we come across the word বস্তুনিব্বান, which reminds us of the Nirvana of Buddha.

The *Shunya-Puran* published by the Sahitya Parishat contains altogether 56 chapters, of which 5 are devoted to an account of the creation of the universe. The rest detail the method of Dharma-worship with occasional references to the sacrifices made by Raja Harichandra and other devout followers of Dharma for the sake of religion. There are several passages in prose in the book which furnish curious specimens of very old Bengali mixed with later interpolations. Our readers will admit from the archaic forms of words in the following lines that they formed a part of the original writings of Ramai Pandit :—

Specimens of passages from the original work.

"হে ভগবান বার ভাই বার আদিত্ত হাত পাতি নেহ সেবকর অর্ঘ পুষ্প পানি সেবক হব স্থখি ধামাং করি গুরু পণ্ডিত দেউলা দান পতি সাংস্থর ভোক্তা আমনি সন্ন্যাসী গতি আইতি।" p. 70

" সুনার কেতকী আনেন করন্তি আসিআ।
চারিদিকে নিরঞ্জন সারিআ ধমা কিস্তা॥" p. 24

" রাতিত পাধর চারি পাতি কর।
কতে হল সুদ সুনার আড়া।"

" কাঞ্চন বাঁধিআ মেজে করিল কাট ভাল মণ্ডপে ফটিকর ধাম লাগে চন্দন নাদন আর সাত ডকে লাগিল গজান। ইলা মণ্ডপে দগ্গন সভা করে।" p. 50

The book contains many passages of this nature, and the learned editor has, in an apologetic tone, expressed his inability to explain many of them.

The last chapter subsequently interpolated.

The last chapter, which is headed "নিরঞ্জনের রুষ্মা" (the anger of Niranjan) and was evidently annexed at least three centuries after the composition of the original work, refers to the revival of Hinduism—the downfall of the followers of Sat-Dharma or pure religion (Buddhism)—and to a free fight between the Mohammadans and the Brahmans at Jajpur, the Mohammadans being described as the incarnations of gods and goddesses, who are said to have come down for wreaking vengeance on the Brahmans for oppressing the Sat-Dharmis. We give a free and abridged translation of the curious passage below.* In all probability the passage was written by Sahadev

* "জাজপুর পুহুবাদি সোলসয় ঘর বেদি
কর লয় ছন।
দখিন্তা মাগিতে জায়, জার ঘরে নাহি পায়
সাঁপ দিয়া পুরায় ভুবন॥ ১
মালদহে লাগে কর দিলঅ কর ছন
দখিন্তা মাগিতে যায় যার ঘরে নাঞি পায়
সাঁপ দিয়া পুড়াএ ভুবন॥ ২
মালদহে লাগে কর না চিনে আপন পর
জালের নাহিক দিস পাস।
বলিষ্ঠ হইল বড় দশবিস হয়া জড়
সদ্ধস্থিরে করএ বিনাস॥ ৩
বেদ করে উচ্চারণ বেয়াঙ্গ অগ্নি ঘনে ঘন
দেখিয়া সভাই কম্পবান।
মনেতে পাইয়া মর্ম্ম সভে বলে রাখ ধর্ম্ম
তোমা বিনা কে করে পরিত্রান॥ ৪
এইরূপে দ্বিজগণ করে স্থষ্টি সংহারণ
ই বড় হোইল অবিচার।
বৈকণ্ঠে থাকিয়া ধর্ম্ম মনেতে পাইয়া মর্ম্ম
মায়াতে হোইল অন্ধকার॥ ৫
ধর্ম্ম হৈল্যা জবন রূপী মাথাএ ত কাল টুপি
হাতে শোভে ত্রিভঙ্গ কামান।
চাপিঞা উত্তম হয় ত্রিভুবনে লাগে ভয়
খোদায় বলিয়া এক নাম॥ ৬

Chakravarti, one of the authors of *Dharmamangal*, of whom we shall hereafter have to write at some length.

The Brahmans and the Sat-Dharmis

" In Jajpur and Maldah sixteen hundred families of Vedic Brahmans mustered strong. Being assembled in groups of ten or twelve, they killed the Sat-Dharmis (Buddhists) who would not pay them religious fees, by uttering incantations and curses. They recited mantras from the Vedas, and fire came out from their mouths as they did so. The followers of Sat-Dharma trembled with fear at the sight thereof, and prayed to Dharma; for who else could give them succour in that crisis? The Brahmans began to destroy the creation in the above manner, and acts of great violence were perpetrated on the earth.

Dharma comes as a Mohammadan to punish the Brahmans.

নিরঞ্জন নিরাকার হৈলা ভেস্ত অবতার
মুগেতে বলেত দস্তগার।
জতেক দেবতাগণ সভে হয়্যা একমন
আনন্দেতে পরিল ইজার॥ ৭
ব্রহ্মা হৈল মহাম্মদ বিষ্ণু হৈল পেকাম্বর
আদম্ফ হৈল মুলপানি।
গনেশ হইল গাজি কার্ত্তিক হৈল কাজি
ফকির হইলা যত মুনি॥ ৮
তেজিয়া আপন ভেক নারদ হইলা সেক
পুরন্দর হইল মলনা।
চন্দ্র সূর্য্য আদি দেবে পদাতিক হয়্যা সেবে
সভে মিলে বাজায় বাজনা॥ ৯
আপুনি চণ্ডিকা দেবী, তিঁহ হৈলা হায়া বিবি
পদ্মাবতী হয়্যা বিবি হুর।
জতেক দেবতাগণ হয়্যা সভে একমন
প্রবেশ করিল জাজপুর॥ ১০
দেউল দেহারা ভাঙ্গে ক্যাড়া ফিড়্যা খায় রঙ্গে
পাখড় পাখড় বোলে বোল।
ধরিয়া ধর্ম্মের পায় রামাঞি পণ্ডিত গায়
ই বড় বিসম গণ্ডগোল॥ ১১ "

Shunya-Puran, p. 140.

(I have changed the word ঘুন to হুর in the second line, as I consider the latter to be the correct reading.)

Dharma who resided in Baikuntha was grieved to see all this. He came to the world as a Mohammadan. On his head he wore a black cap, and in his hand he held a cross-bow. He mounted a horse and was called Khoda. Niranjan incarnated himself in Bhest (Heaven). All the gods, being of one mind, wore trousers. Brahma incarnated himself as Mohammad, Vishnu as Paigambar and Shiv became Adamfa (Adam). Ganesh came as a Gazi, Kartik as a Kazi, Narad became a Sekh and Indra a Moulana. The Rishis of Heaven became Fakirs. The Sun, the Moon and the other gods came in the capacity of foot-soldiers, and began to beat drums. The goddess Chandi incarnated herself as Haya Bibi and Padmavati became Bibi Nur. The gods, being all of one mind, entered Jajpur. They broke the temples and Maths and cried "seize," "seize." Falling at the feet of Dharma, Ramai Pandit sings, "O what a great confusion!"

The history of the fight unknown.

What historical incident is referred to, in the description given above, is not clearly known. But it unmistakably points to a general feeling of gratification with which the Sat-Dharmis watched the oppression of the Brahmans by the Mohammadans at Jajpur, which they attributed to divine wrath for the atrocities committed upon them.

The chapter detailing the entrances to the temple guarded by the Dwar-Pandits reminds us of the great scholars who would admit students to Buddhistic monasteries after a scrutinising examination as to their fitness.

In the Bikramashila monastery, there were the following Dwar-Pandits during the time of Sanak, the King of Gaud (955-983 A.D.) :—

In the eastern gate—Acharya Ratnakar-Shanti.
Western gate—Acharya Bageshwar-Kirtti.
Southern gate—Prabhakar-Mati.
On the first Central door-way—Ratna-Bajra.
Second Central door-way—Jnana-Sri Mitra.

Of these great scholars at least three hailed from Bengal.

In the temple at Hakanda, as described in the *Shunya-Puran*, the Northern gate was guarded by Nilai Pandit with 800 *gatis* or followers, the Eastern gate was guarded by Kangshai Pandit with 1,200 *gatis* or disciples. The Southern and Western gates had for their Dwar-Pandit Ramai Pandit with 1,600 *gatis* and Swetai Pandit with 400 *gatis* respectively.

The magnificent monasteries of old disappeared at the ruthless attack of the invaders, but up to comparatively modern times there were vague memories of their splendour preserved in the descriptions of the Hakanda Temple—" কনক মন্দির প্রভুর কনক বিহার " (The temple oft he Lord was built with gold and the monastery attached to it was golden).

All these accounts of Hakanda temple are reminiscent of the glorious monasteries of old, and though we cannot explain many passages of the *Shunya-Puran*, we feel, when perusing it, as if we are in the midst of the relics of great Buddhistic monasteries of old—though they exist in vague memories and faint recollections only. Quite recently Mr. Basanta Kumar Chatterjee, M.A., has published a part of Mayur Bhatta's *Dharmamangal*. The poet has given an autobiographical account in the preliminary portion of the book. It appears from this account that Mayur Bhatta was a contemporary of Dharma Sen, grandson of Lau Sen, the hero of the poem. The editor, Mr. Chatterjee, has shown by numerous historical evidences that Lau Sen lived in the latter half of the 10th or early in the 11th century A.D. Mayur Bhatta's sponsor Dharma Sen was a son of Chitra Sen, Lau Sen's son.

Mr. Chatterjee has given a list of other writers of Dharma-mangal poems who flourished after Mayur Bhatta. Nearly all of them followed in the footprints of the earliest writer, to whom they offered their tribute of gratitude in the prologue to their poems. Most of these writers have already been mentioned by me in my *Banga Bhasa-o-Sahitya* and other books :—

(1) The earliest of these poets, next to Mayur Bhatta, was Khelaram. He mentions the date of the composition of the work

as 1449 Saka or (1527 A.D.) I do not agree with the finding of Mr. Chatterjee in regard to the explanation of the couplet "ভুবন শকে বায়ু—মাস শরের বাহন" (Bhuban = 14, বায়ু = 49) = Saka 1449, and শরের বাহন (the carrier of arrows) means Dhanu or bow, which corresponds to the month of অগ্রহায়ণ (November-December).

(2) After Khelaram, the next poet was Sahadev Chakrabarti (1740 A.D.).

(3) Ghanaram Chakrabarty of Krishnapur (1711 A.D).

(4) Ramchandra Banerjee of Chanot (1732 A.D.).

(5) Sitaram Das of Indas (1734 A.D.).

(6) Ramdas Adak of Hayatpur (towards the end of the 17th century A.D.).

(7) Manik Ganguli of Bishnupur (1694-1748 A.D.).

(8) Ramnarayan (1786 A.D.).

It will appear from the above list that most of these writers of *Dharmamangal* poems flourished in the 18th century. Dharma-Thakur had been beyond the pale of the Hindu Pantheon for several centuries after the decline of Buddhism, and no good Brahman was prepared to associate himself with the worship of this deity. This we see from the prologue to Manik Ganguli's poem that he commenced to write a poem on Dharma-Thakur with a feeling of great hesitancy and fear lest he should lose his caste by such association.

But gradually the temple of Dharma-Thakur was Hinduised to some extent and some of the Brahmins identified themselves with this creed as it proved a source of great pecuniary gain, having the support of the populace ; so that from the beginning of the 18th century the portals of these temples were thrown open to the Hindu masses. In the 17th century, though good Brahmans still had scruple in taking part in the *puja* of the Dharma-Thakur, the Hindu laity enjoyed much more toleration and they freely participated in the *puja* rites and people of many castes wrote poems on Dharma-Thakur. When the channel was thus clear, a large number of writers, who had so long been held in check

owing to the antipathy of the Brahmans, came forward to write these poems.

4. SAHAJIYA-CULT

The Sahajiya creed started by the Buddhists.

When Buddhism declined in India, and Hinduism had not yet risen on her horizon in the fullness of its glorious revival, when the idea of a higher life inspired by a keen sense of morality and introspection, which was the dominant spirit of Buddhism, declined into scepticism and sensuality, and when devotion and absolute trust in God, which characterised the Pauranic Hinduism, was yet unknown—in the twilight of the transition-period, mystic rituals of Tantrikism ruled Buddhistic and Hindu communities all over India. The Bamachari Tantriks perpetrated wanton crimes in the name of religion, and the vast literature they have left us lays down codes for those initiated in the creed, which totally upset the moral fabric of society.

The Sahajiya-cult owed its origin to the Bamachari Buddhists. Salvation was sought for by a process of rituals in which young and beautiful women were required to be loved and worshipped. In sexual love there is surely a higher side which points to love Divine. The Sahajiya-cult was originally based upon this idea.

Kahnapada, a Buddhist scholar, who lived in the latter part of the 10th century, was the first apostle of love-songs of the Sahajiya-cult in Bengal. This love is not a legitimate affair sanctioned by society; with one's own wife it could not, according to this creed, reach a high stage of perfection. Kahnapada's work,

Charyya-Padas

which formulates the creed of Bamachar, is called *Charyya-Padas*. It was recovered from Nepal by Mahamahopadhyay Hara Prasad Shastri. Another work of a similar kind is *Bodhi-Charyyavatara*, the MS. of which, as I have said elsewhere, is incomplete.

There are passages in the love-songs contained in the above two works which are decidedly erotic; but they are permeated

by a mystic spiritual significance and are capable of a higher interpretation.

The doctrines promulgated by the Bamachari Buddhists did not pass away with the overthrow of the Buddhistic influence in Bengal. In the Sahajiya creed of Vaishnavas, the old doctrines reappeared amongst the masses, and its great exponent Chandidas echoed the sentiments of Kahnapada in his love-songs, giving it a far higher spiritual tone than it had ever received from the Buddhists. Chandidas lived in the 14th century; so his writings do not, properly speaking, belong to the pre-Mohammadan period, to which we should have confined ourselves in this chapter. For an exposition of the Sahajiya doctrines, however, we find it necessary to refer to some of his songs which elucidate the essential principles of this curious creed. Says Chandidas :—

Chandidas as an exponent of Sahajiya.

"Every one speaks of Sahajiya—but alas! who knows its realmeaning? One who has crossed the region of darkness (passions) can alone have the light of Sahajiya."*

Chandidas's writings on this point occasionally appear as riddles—and indeed all writings of this class are so—but they give a sufficient glimpse of the purity of his faith.

"The woman must remain chaste and never be untrue; she will sacrifice herself entirely to love, but outwardly the object of her love will be as nobody to her. Secret love must be indulged in secret; and thereby her mind should be purified: but she should not submit to desire. She must plunge herself headlong into the sea of abuse but at the same time scrupulously avoid touching the forbidden stream and be quite indifferent both to pleasure and to pain (she will allow herself to be abused by others remaining true to herself)." †

* "সহজ সহজ, সবাই কহয়
সহজ জানিবে কে।
তিমির অন্ধকার যে হৈয়াছে পার
সহজ জেনেছে সে॥ Chandidas.

† "হইবি সতী, না হবি অসতী।"
"অন্তরে পরাণ বাটিয়া দেওবি
বাহিরে বাসিবি পর।"

To play with passions, to indulge freely in love, at the same time to guard oneself against sexual vice, is risky. The poet knows it well and says* : " To be a true lover, one must be able to make a frog dance in the mouth of a snake " (which means the lover, while playing with dangerous passion, nay, while apparently running even to the very mouth of destruction, must possess the self-control to return unhurt). " This love may be attained by one who can suspend the highest peak of Mount Sumeru in the air with a thread, or bind an elephant with a gossamer " ;†—implying that it is not in an ordinary man's power to control the surging passions of love and remain immaculate in his vow. The poet says that, by exercising restraint over feelings and desires and at the same time by running through great sacrifices for its cause, salvation through love may be obtained.

According to Chandidas, the initiated people must exercise great discretion in selecting their objects of love. The lovers should be both pure in heart, spiritually bent and immaculate in morals.

" If a young maiden (of a spiritual temperament) falls in love with a man of inferior quality, she shares the fate of a flower

* " গোপন পীরিতি গোপনে রাখিবি
সাধিবি মনের কাজ।"
" না হবি কাহার বস।"
" কলঙ্ক সাগরে সিনান করিবি
এলাঞা মাথার কেশ।
নীরে না ভিজিবি, জল না ছুঁইবি
সব দুখ সব ক্লেশ।"
" সাপের মুখেতে ভেকেরে নাচাবি
তবেত রসিক-রাজ।"
" যে জন চতুর, সুমেরু শেখর
সুতায় গাঁথিতে পারে।
মাকড়াসার জালে, মাতঙ্গ বাঁধিলে
এ রস মিলয়ে তারে॥"

pierced by thorns and dies of a broken heart. If a youth happens to fall in love with a maiden of lower type, he becomes like one, who is under the influence of evil spirits—moves about in great unrest, and eventually succumbs to despair; says Chandidas. Such a union between a good-natured person and one who bears an opposite character may be compared to love between the tooth and the tongue (*i.e.*, they live together, but the former does not let an opportunity slip to bite the latter)."*

Chandidas himself loved a washer-woman following the rules of the Sahajiya-cult, for according to *Gupta Sadhan Tantra*, a book of authority with the sect, a washerwoman, amongst others, is a legitimate subject of such love for a Bamachari Tantrik. Here is the text of the above Tantra.*—

"A dancing girl, a girl of Kapali caste, a prostitute, a washerwoman, a barber's daughter, a Brahman girl, a Sudra girl, a milkmaid, a girl of the Malakar caste—these nine are recognised as the legitimate subjects for Tantric practices; those that are most clever amongst these, should be held as pre-

* "যে জাতি যুবতি, সাধিতে সে রতি কুজাতি পুরুষে ধরে।
কণ্টকে যেমতি পুষ্প হয় ক্ষত হৃদয় ফাটিয়া মরে॥
পুরুষ তেমতি নারী হীন জাতি রতির আশ্রয় লয়।
ভূতে ধরে তারে মরে ঘুরে ফিরে দ্বিজ চণ্ডীদাস কয়॥
সুজনের সনে আনের পীরিতি কহিতে পরাণ ফাটে।
জিহ্বার সহিত দন্তের পীরিতি সময় পাইলে কাটে॥"

(It should be noted here that the word রতি, as used in the above extract, meant pure love in Chandidas's time. Its meaning has since degraded and it now signifies a low carnal gratification.)

† "নটী কপালিকী বেশ্যা রজকী নাপিতাঙ্গনা।
ব্রাহ্মণী শূদ্রকন্যা চ তথা গোপালকন্যকা॥
মালাকারস্য কন্যা চ নব কন্যাঃ প্রকীর্তিতাঃ।
বিশেষবৈদগ্ধ্যযুতাঃ সর্ব্বা এব কুলাঙ্গনাঃ॥
রূপযৌবনসম্পন্নাঃ শীলসৌভাগ্যশালিন্যঃ।
পূজনীয়াঃ প্রযত্নেন তত্রঃ সিদ্ধো ভবেন্নরঃ॥"

Gupta Sadhan Tantra.

eminently fit; maidens endowed with beauty, good luck, youth and amiable disposition are to be worshipped with care and a man's salvation is attained thereby."

In purity and edifying influence, Chandidas's sentiments made a near approach to spiritual love; and he literally worshipped the washerwoman with the ardour of a devotee, though he himself was a good Brahman. Her name was Rami, and Chandidas says of her:—

"O my love! I have taken refuge at thy feet, knowing, they have a cooling effect (on my burning heart). I adore your beauty beaming with holy maidenhood which inspires no carnal desire. When I do not see you, my mind becomes restless; and as I see you, my heart is soothed. O washerwoman, my lady, you are to me what parents are to helpless children. The three prayers that a Brahman offers daily to his God, I offer to you. You are to me as holy as Gayatri from which the Vedas originated. I know you to be the goddess Sarasvati who inspires songs. I know you to be the goddess Parvati, the goddess of the mountains. You are the garland of my neck, my heaven and earth, my nether worlds, nay, my whole universe! You are the star of my eyes. Without you all is dark to me. My eyes are soothed when I see you. The day I do not see your moon-like face, I remain like a dead man. I cannot, for a moment, forget your grace and beauty. O, tell me how I may deserve your favour! You are my sacred hymns and the essence of my prayers. My love for your maidenly beauty has not any element of physical desire in it. Says Chandidas, the love of the washerwoman is pure gold tested by touch-stone."*

* শুন রজকিনী রামি,
ও দুটি চরণ, শীতল বলিয়া, শরণ লইলাম আমি।
রজকিনী রূপ, কিশোরী স্বরূপ, কাম গন্ধ নাহি তায়।
না দেখিলে মন, করে উচাটন, দেখিলে পরাণ জুড়ায়।

Chandidas was himself convinced that sexual love leads to Love Divine. He says: "Hear me, friends, how salvation may be attained through love for a woman: Reduce your body to a dry log (*i.e.*, make it such as to be quite unmoved by passions). He that pervades the universe, unseen by all, is approachable only by him who knows the secret of pure love."*

So sang Chandidas, the great exponent of the Sahajiya-cult in Bengal in the 14th century, more than three hundred years after Kahnapada had composed his love songs. It goes without saying that, in their earnest efforts to attain salvation by worshipping young and beautiful damsels, many a youth turned moral wrecks in this country. Chandidas rightly says that "in a million it would be difficult to find one"† who has the capacity for self-restraint required by the Sahajiya preachers.

তুমি রজকিনী আমার রমণী, তুমি হও মাতৃ পিতৃ।
ত্রিসন্ধ্যা যাজন, তোমার ভজন, তুমি বেদমাতা গায়ত্রী॥
তুমি রাধাদিনী, হরের রমণী, তুমি সে গলার হারা।
তুমি স্বর্গ মর্ত্য, পাতাল, পর্ব্বত, তুমি সে নয়ানের তারা॥
তোমা বিনে মোর সকলই আঁধার, দেখিলে জুড়ায় আঁখি।
যে দিন না দেখি ও চাঁদবদন মরমে মরিয়া থাকি॥
ও রূপ মাধুরি পাশরিতে নারি, কি দিয়ে করিব বশ।
তুমি সে মন্ত্র, তুমি সে তন্ত্র, তুমি উপাসনা রস॥
রজকিনী রূপ, কিশোরী স্বরূপ, কাম গন্ধ নাহি তায়।
রজকিনী প্রেম, নিকষিত হেম, বড়ু চণ্ডিদাসে গায়॥"

* "নায়িকা সাধন, শুনহ লক্ষণ,
যেরূপে করিতে হয়।
শুষ্ক কাষ্ঠের সম, আপনার দেহ
করিতে হয়॥
ব্রহ্মাণ্ড ব্যাপিয়া, আছয়ে যে জন,
কেহ না দেখয়ে তারে।
প্রেমের আরতি, যে জন জানয়ে,
সেই সে পাইতে পারে॥"

Chandidas.

† "কোটিতে গোটিক হয়"—Chandidas.

The dangers of Sahajiya—the harm it did to the Vaishnava society.

From the earliest time the Hindu society does not seem to have offered any refuge to fallen women. The dangers of admitting fallen women to a society with a severe ideal of female purity were fully realised by the Hindus. The rite of *Sati*, and an uncompromising form of widowhood, sprang up in our social organisation, as natural alternatives for women on the death of their husbands. The Buddhists reserved a place in their nunneries for fallen women and for those who took the vow of life-long maidenhood. The Buddhist Bhikhsus and Bhikshunis (monks and nuns), who probably started the principles of salvation by sexual love with all the noble intentions of Donna Julia in *Don Juan*, fell victims to their own snares and rightly earned the contemptuous title of নেড়া-নেড়ি—a nickname for the 'shaved couple.' This epithet is now applied to the fallen men and women of the Vaishnava society, though the women of that class do not get their heads shaved as the Buddhist Bhikshunis used to do. The Buddhist monks and nuns who formed improper relationships were the persons who were first called নেড়া-নেড়ি। The Vaishnavas who borrowed the Sahajiya-cult from the Buddhists were not spared the abuse implied by this nomenclature. Chandidas himself knew the dangers of the creed and perhaps he stood the severe test. But latterly it became debased to the extreme and produced disastrous results on the Vaishnava community. The origin of this creed is to be traced to the Pali work *Katha-Bathu* written in the 3rd century B.C., and references to the misdeeds done by its adherents are to be found in the account of Dipankar (7th century A.D.) in the work "Indian Saints in the Land of Snow."

For love, a little out of the way, if sanctioned by religion, offers temptations which the mass of men can hardly resist; and it is no wonder that, taking advantage of a wicked interpretation of the love of Radha and Krishna, this cult of the Buddhist monks found favour in the lower stratum of Vaishnava society, the degeneracy of which was mainly brought about by the immoral latitudes of the Sahajiya Vaisnhavas. The great Vaishnava leaders were conscious

of this drawback of their society and so condemned the creed. Chaitanya-Dev would not allow any of his ascetic followers to mix with women, and Adwaita, Haridas and other devotees who followed him were unsparing in their hostile attitude to the Sahajiya Vaishnavas. Yet the creed numbered its votaries by hundreds amongst the Vaishnavas, and we have come across about thirty authors in old Bengali literature who advocated the principles of Sahajiya.*

* The following books, among others, give an exposition of the Sahajiya doctrines—some of them were written nearly 400 years ago, but *all, before the British conquest.* Most of them contain prose-passages which may be taken as specimens of early Bengali prose.:—

1.	Svarup-Varan	by Krishnadas.
2.	Vrindaban-Dhyan	
3.	Gurusishya-Sambad	
4.	Rupamanjari	
5.	Prarthana	
6.	Rasa-BhaktiLahari	
7.	Raga-Ratnavali	
8.	Siddhinam	attributed to Norottam Das.
9.	Atma-Sadhan	
10.	Amrita-Rasa-Chandrika	
11.	Premabhab-Chandrika	
12.	Saratsar-Karika	
13.	Bhakti-Latika	
14.	Sadhya-Prem-Chandrika	
15.	Raga-Mala	
16.	Svarup-Kalpa-Latika	
17.	Prem-Vilas	
18.	Tatva-Nirupan	
19.	Rasa-Bhakti-Chandrika	
20.	Upasana-Patal	by Premdas.
21.	Ananda-Bhairav	
22.	Ananda-Lahari	by Norottom Das.
23.	Dinamani-Chandroday	by Manohardas.
24.	Siddhanta-Chandroday	
25.	Amrita-Rasa-Valli	
26.	Vaishnavamrita	by Mukunda Das.
27	Saratsara-Karika	
28.	Sadhan-Upaya	
29.	Raga-Ratnavali	
30.	Tatva-Katha	by Jadunath Das.
31.	Yogagama	by Jagat Krishna Das.
32.	Bhandatattva-Sar	by Rasamay Das.
33.	Rati-Vilas	by Rasik Das.
34	Sahajatattva	by Radha Ballav Das.
35.	Dipakajjal	by Vanshidas.
36.	Nikunja-Rahasya	
37.	Siddharati-Karika	attributed to Sanatan by one who subscribes himself as a disciple of Krishnadas Kaviraj.
38.	Vivartta-Vilas	

5. The Buddhist Dohas

The late MM. Haraprasad Shastri brought from Nepal some MSS. in 1907 and subsequently announced that these contained specimens of earliest Bengali poetry. It was about six years later that his first article on these MSS. appeared in the *Journal of the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat* (1321 B.S., Pt. I. pp. 21-47; 1322 B S., pp. 121-60), and in 1919 they were published under the title *Bauddha-Doha-o-Gan* at the cost of the Raja of Lalgola.

The work as published by H. P. Shastri contains poetical pieces composed by 33 authors in a language which is very abstruse. The editor contends that the language used is Bengali, a theory which he seeks to support mainly by adducing two reasons: Firstly, in his opinion, the words to be found in these writings are to be regarded as belonging to Old Bengali, some of which have been retained in the language even in its modern form, despite a great lapse of time. Secondly, the 33 authors who composed these verses were all Bengalis, which should lead to the inference that whatever they wrote must have been in Bengali.

The discovery of H. P. Shastri, if we accept his conclusions, is very important. We are to admit in that case that Bengali has had a literature dating from the 8th century A.D., which means that it can very well claim the honour of being ranked with some of the oldest of the modern languages of Europe. But that claim must be based on indisputable grounds: it will have to be proved definitely that these specimens of poetry are forms of Old Bengali and of no other language. It must be confessed that the grounds advanced to prove this point, though they admit of a partial justification, are far from convincing so far as the collection as a whole is concerned, and are open to serious objections.

The difficulty about this collection of poems is that there is no fixed literary standard by which to judge its linguistic character. There is no other literary work, definitely known to be in Bengali,

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with which the *Bauddha-Doha-o-Gan* can be compared. Consequently, its linguistic character cannot be pronounced to be that of Bengali on an examination of relative features, which would have been possible had there been other literary documents to fall back upon for purposes of a comparative study. The compilation must be judged by itself. Its literary and linguistic characteristics are to be analysed and examined on a wider basis, from the standpoint of their affinities and affiliations to Apabhramsa and Prakrit languages.

It may be assumed that, in the 8th or the 9th century, the dialects spoken in Behar, Orissa, Mithila and Bengal were greatly akin to one another, having in common been mainly derived from the Magadhi Prakrit. Consequently, the very principle involved in selecting certain words and forms as being exclusively of the Bengali stock is not accurate. For they may have been current in the other eastern dialects also for all that we know. The forms করিঅ, করিঅই, মচ্ছিঅ, which Shastri takes to be those of an older phase of our dialect, are in fact characteristics of the Sauraseni Prakrit as found in its grammar. Expressions like জাণ, ডাল, সুণু, etc., which are dubbed as Bengali, are also to be met with in old Maithili and Hindi. The list of words given by Shastri cannot prove an essentially and exclusively Bengali character for most of the poems incorporated in the work; for many of the words are to be found in Hindi, Oriya, Maithili and Assamese. Words such as চঞ্চল, কাল, চিহ্ন, তরু, পরিমাণ, ডাব, সুখ, etc., though Sanskritic, are found in current Bengali also, but do they not appear in many other Sanskritic languages as well? Amongst others অচ্ছুম, আক্কো, করিঅ, কায়া, কিঅ, কীঅ, চান্দ, are pointed to as connected with Old Bengali, but it is known that such words occur in Prakrit, and that some of the last forms are nearer Hindi than Bengali. In this connexion it is worthy of note that the long ā, which is sometimes affixed to the first letter of a distinctly Bengali word but is often missed in Hindi and Maithili, is non-existent in the present collection, e.g., অপন for আপন (Padas 6/12,26/3, 21/3, 39/3), রণ্ডী for রাণ্ডী (doha 85), বঙ্গালী

for বাঙ্গালী (padas 42/2), বঙ্গালে for বাঙ্গালায় (49/5), ভণ্ডার for ভাণ্ডার (49/5), ভতার for ভাতার (i.e., ভর্ত্তা—20/1), ভতি for ভ্রান্তি (doha 126), চকা for চাকা (14/4).

Besides these there are words which are really strange to Bengali, but they suggest an affinity to a language like Brajabuli, which was created by Vaishnava poets in imitation of Vidyapati containing a large admixture of Hindi and Maithili words. It is as absurd to call Brajabuli a type of Bengali, as to apply that designation to a language in which non-Bengali words like the following occur frequently: অইসন=এছন (p. 5), পাবই=পায় (p. 5), পিবই=পান করে (p. 12), মাঙ্গত=চাহে (p. 16), যোই=যে (p. 19), জইসো=যে প্রকার (p. 24), কইসন=কৈছন (p. 38), তস্থ=তাহার (p. 42), তোহোরি=তোমার (p. 43), সো=সে (p. 45), তস্থ=তাহার (p. 42), কইসে=কিরূপে (p. 45), মই=আমি (p. 54), কাঁস=কেমন (p. 62), ভইয়া=হইয়া (p. 63).

It is to be added, however, that the test of words is not final in solving the question of classification of dialects. Any number of instances may be cited showing that the incorporation of foreign words does not destroy the identity of a language.

The sentence "স্বভাব-সৌন্দর্য্য-মুগ্ধ রামচন্দ্র মনোরম তপোবনে বিশ্রাম লাভ করিলেন," though full of Sanskrit words, is yet unmistakably Bengali. The *Chaitanya-Charitamrita* by Krishnadas Kaviraj, though abounding in Hindi words, is not for that reason a Hindi work; neither is the *Kali Kirtan* by Ramprasad a Sanskrit work, although the Sanskrit element predominates in it. Some chapters of Ram Vasu's *Pratapaditya-Charit* are full of Persian and Urdu words, but this does not take away their Bengali character.

The post-positions to denote cases and forms of verbal inflexions are the distinguishing features of a language, and these afford a far more scientific basis for linguistic differentiation than a mere study of words. In regard to most of the post-positions denoting cases used in these songs and Dohas, it is to be observed that they are those found in common in Maithili, Hindi, Oriya, Assamese, Bengali, and even Marwari and Nepalese. No one language in particular can claim any of these forms as peculiarly

its own. Reference may be made here to the use of র as a suffix for the genitive case, as in পাটের in the line " এড়ি এই ছান্দক বান্ধা করণক পাটের আস " (p. 1), in রুখের in " রুখের তেন্তলি কুম্ভীরে খায় " (p. 5) and in হরিণার in " তরঙ্গন্তে হরিণার খুর নদী সঅ " (p. 13). This may seem to be a specially Bengali form, but is not really so. Dr. Hœrnle gives numerous examples of the genitive sign occurring in many of the Indo-Aryan languages. This suffix is used not only in regard to pronouns in the cognate dialects, but very largely in regard to nouns as well. Notice may be taken of the use of this sign in ' জনর ' (Oriya), meaning ' of a man,' and again, in ' জনরো ঘর ' (Marwari), which means ' the house of a man.' Hœrnle traces the genitive post-positions ' র ' and ' এর ' to ' কেরর,' ' কের ' or ' কর ' of Prakrit and says that " in using ' কের ' in composition with the word in the genitive case, the initial ' ক ' of the former is elided regularly, thus we arrive at ' এর '." In Oriya and Maithili the form এর is frequently found, for instance we find " শীতের ওড়না পিয়া," " গীব্বিষের বা" in Vidyapati ; so এর can not be accepted as an exclusively Bengali pecularity. In the earlier stages of these sister dialects there were many forms in use, but they were given up at a later stage though some dialects may have adhered to them. In older forms of Bengali this ' এর ' was merely ' র.' We find this ' র ' used in Assamese in the 16th century, and in other dialects of the neighbouring provinces.

Our attention may next be directed to the use of verbs. Some forms such as আইলা, গেলা (p. 14) and করিআ (p. 21) may seem to represent the peculiarities of Bengali verbal forms. But even in regard to these expressions a legitimate doubt may arise since similar verbal inflexions are found current in Maithili in the 14th and 15th centuries, as attested by the poems of Vidyapati in their original Maithili form, from which the following example may be quoted : নিরমিল (p. 16, pada 23), লএ = লয় (18/28), গেল (21/33, 44/67, 87/72), গেলি (32/51, 35/54), পাব (36/55), যাব 36/55), জানি (36/55), জান (63/98), জাইতে = যাইতে (47/73), সুন = শুন (62/97), সুনই = শুন (51/78), হেরি (53/81), সুনাব = শুনাব

(63/98), কর অবধান (57/88), আইলি (49/76), ছুইতে=ছুঁইতে (62/96), ছুইলি (62/96), তলব (65/101), থাকয় (65/102), উঠঅ (69/108), করঅ=করয় (23/37), গনঅ (25/39), করয় (48/74), পাএ=পায় (67/105), আলয় (35/54), আনি (36/55).

The only other argument which has been used to prove that these songs and Dohas are Bengali, is that they were all composed by Bengali authors only. Apart from the question as to whether these writers all hailed from Bengal or not, it is a precarious theory that the nationality of an author settles the problem of the identity of the language which he may choose to use as a literary medium when that language by this process of argument may turn out to be one the very existence of which cannot be established from any independent evidence. There cannot, however, be any doubt that the language in which these 33 authors of the *Bauddha-Gan-o-Doha* wrote, was such as could be understood not merely by the Bengalis of their time, but by the people of some of the neighbouring provinces as well, whose languages share some of the characteristics that can be traced in this collection of songs and aphorisms. It must be pointed out also that the claim that all the 33 authors of this group belonged to the Bengali stock, cannot be regarded as something that has been proved beyond doubt. On the contrary there is convincing ground for challenging that claim in regard to some of these writers. For instance, Bhusukhu, one of these writers, is described by the Sanskrit commentator as a native of Saurashtra. Bendall, who has collected some of his songs, also calls him so. Similarly, Kahnapada, whom the Sanskrit commentator calls an Oriya Brahman, passes as a Bengali in H. P. Shastri's edition.

From the foregoing observations it is apparent that the case that the songs and Dohas collected by H. P. Shastri represent the earliest literary form of the Bengali language, which has been sought to be made out, can hardly be regarded as having been satisfactorily established. If the language in which these early literary efforts have been made, reveals striking affinities, grammatically and linguistically, to most of the provincial languages of

the eastern group, each one of the latter can in that case claim with almost equal justification that these mark the beginnings of the literature associated with itself. If such a claim on behalf of the other languages cannot be entertained, it is difficult to understand why the case of the Bengali language should receive a preferential consideration. Nor can there be much reason in the theory that since Bengali is known to have a literary history dating from comparatively early times, the language in which these songs and Dohas are composed must represent the most ancient form of Bengali, which served the purpose of a literary pattern to the other languages of Eastern India, whose process of development was slower and more recent.

Although H. P. Shastri calls the language of these songs and Dohas Bengali, the Sanskrit commentator who explains their meaning calls it Prakrit, and Bendall defines it as the Apabhramsa-bhasha. A close survey of its linguistic features will show that it represents on the whole a stage of development that is characterised primarily by borrowings from the Magadhi Prakrit, and secondarily from Apabhramsa dialects and a few other Prakrits. Early Bengali writers themselves gave the name 'Prakrit' to the language of their province. Rajendra Das, an East Bengal poet, who gives an animated description of Sakuntala's love in the 16th century, states at the end of his work that he writes in '*Prakrit pada-bandha*.' In the works *Krishna-Karnamrita* and *Govinda-Lilamrita* written by Jadu Nandan Das in the same century, we come across the statement that the language used by him is Prakrit. Lochan Das, the illustrious biographer of Chaitanya, gives the same apellation to Bengali. In a translation of Jayadev's *Gita-Govinda*, the Bengali poet Rasamay Das writes at the end of the 12th canto that his rendering is in Prakrit: ইতি শ্রীগীতগোবিন্দে মহাকাব্যে প্রাকৃতভাষায়াং স্বাধীনভর্তৃকাবর্ণনে সুপ্রীত-পীতাম্বর-নামা দ্বাদশসর্গঃ। Any number of such instances of the appellation of Prakrit being applied to Bengali by writers in that language are available, of which a few only are given above.

If there is a similarity between the songs and Dohas and the Vaishnava padavali-literature of Bengal, it may be urged that their affinity to some of the passages quoted in the *Prakrita-Pingalam* is no less obvious and striking. Many Prakrit words were freely imported into Bengali, such as বহই দক্খিন মারুতই শীতলং। কোমল কোইলা ॥ (p. 465, ed. by Chandra Mohan Ghosh). রে ধনি মত্ত ময়ং গজ গামিণী। খংজন লোচনি চন্দ মুহী ॥ চঞ্চল জব্বন জাত ন জানহি (p. 223).

Nobody will dispute that the primary basis of Bengali is Prakrit. The language in which the songs and Dohas are written, being so very much akin to Prakrit, can very well be taken generally as marking a stage of development prior to the emergence of Bengali and other cognate languages as suitable vehicles for literary treatment. This subject-matter which is most abstruse and mystical must have had a much wider appeal transcending the requirements of a particular province; and the language chosen for the purpose must have been such as could facilitate exchange of thoughts and ideas among scholars and saints from the different provinces of Eastern India, interested in the exposition of the particular cult with which these writings are associated. It is quite likely, however, that within the range of this literature are preserved the earliest signs of Bengali rising to the rank of a literary form. It will not be difficult to agree to the view expressed by Dr. Sahidullah, in the course of a conversation with me, that some of the Dohas show a stage of Bengali which had just emerged from its Apabhramsa framework. As example he cited the lines of Kukkuripada: রুখের তেন্তুলি কুম্ভীরে খাঅ (9th century); of Bhusukhu: জবেঁ মসা এর চা(র) তুটঅ তরঙ্গতে হরিণার খুর না দীশঅ; of Kambalambara: মাঙ্গত চউদিম চাহঅ কেডু আল নাহিঁ বাহাকে পাবঅ. Here 'খাঅ' (খায়), 'তুটঅ' (টুটয়) 'দিশতন' (দেখয়) are forms peculiar to Bengali. Not only in language but, as Dr. P. C. Bagchi has shown, in idea also, the original creed of the Sahajiyas may be traced in these Dohas, whereas many aphorisms such as অপনা মাংসে হরিণা বৈরী and মাকড়ের হাতে যেন ঝুনো নারিকেল are to be found off and on in old Bengali literature.

As to Bhusukhu, whose lines approximating to Bengali are quoted above, it may be observed here that, although it is extremely doubtful that he was originally a Bengali, there is nothing to wonder at in his attempt to embody his ideas in a language which was so much akin to Bengali, in fact much nearer to Bengali, than most of the other specimens included in Shastri's collection. To the evidence already quoted, pointing to his non-Bengali origin, may be added that of the couplet আজি ভুসু বঙ্গালী ভইলী। নিঅ ঘরিণী চণ্ডালী লেলী। (p. 73—Today, Bhusukhu, you have turned a Bengali, for you have taken a Chandali to be your mistress), which, to my mind, gives an effective indication that he was not originally a native of this province, but, by adopting a manner of life that was considered essential for the practice of a cult particularly associated with Bengal, he became a Bengali for all practical purposes and even wrote in a language which represents the earliest available form of the literary development of the Apabhramsa current in Bengal But this line, like many others in the Doha literature, has an esoteric interpretation and means a thing quite different from what the words themselves seem to imply.

Since in regard to the subject-matter of these songs and Dohas, there is a much closer parallelism between it and the Sahajiya literature developed by Bengali writers in subsequent times than any allied literature produced by one or other of the provincial languages of Eastern India, and since also some of the particular forms, words and expressions used in the collection, though to be found in common, as we have already said, in most of these languages, occur more abundantly in Bengali than in any other sister language, and their transitional stages can be traced in it as following lines of natural evolution, it will be quite proper to hold that the language in which most of them were composed, though used as a common medium of expression throughout Eastern India, was a forerunner of Bengali in a much truer sense than of any other member of the allied group of languages, and that a few of them even make the nearest

approximation to the earliest literary forms used in that language.

It is, however, to be clearly understood that there must always remain a genuine disinclination to regard the language or languages used in this collection as representing the exact reproduction of one or more forms that may have been current during the period of their composition for purposes of ordinary literary communication. This literature abounds with forms and expressions that have highly technical values and cannot be understood except by adepts of a certain mystical school. Words here do not bear their ordinary meaning : they mostly possess a symbolical sense known only to the initiated. The style is that of a school whose abstruse doctrines are deliberately kept under a veil of mystification : here language does not clarify the meanings of ideas expressed, but on the other hand tends to hide them from those who do not belong to the chosen circle. The artificial character of such a language is obvious. It was on the whole created out of the floating mass of Prakrits and the growing Apabhramsa languages of a definite geographical and cultural area to serve the special needs of a cult and remained current among its adherents. Nonetheless, it was impossible for them to escape altogether the influence of provincialism in using that language, which accounts for the occurrence of certain forms that can be pronounced as bearing the stamp of Bengali in its early stages of development. The Brajabuli language also, which is predominantly a mixture of Hindi and Bengali, formed for the use of Vaishnava poets and saints of a later epoch, similarly contains many abstruse terms and expressions and cannot be regarded as a representative literary type. The Dohas do not represent any recognised school of old Bengali ; they are more like incantations or mantras used by our snake-charmers, culled from heterogeneous sources and do not bear the stamp exclusively of any particular dialect of Eastern India.

The stories like Malanchamala, Shankhamala and Kanchanmala, which evidently bear the stamp of a remote Buddhist

period, were collected by Mr. Dakshina Ranjan Mitra-Majumdar in the First Edition of his *Thakurmar Jhuli*. These abounded in archaic expressions and abstruse words which the literary public of the present day found a hard nut to crack. In the subsequent editions, the compiler had thoroughly to modernise the language. Yet no one could doubt for a moment that the stories were originally composed in Bengali. The Dohas, on the other hand, do not belong to the school of Bengali Folklore, though in point of time they might be held to be contemporaneous with some of these stories. Neither do they belong to the school of the Bengali Sahajiyas, though we occasionally light upon common tenets and sayings in them. Nor should the Dohas be classed with the school of the theological dogmas of the Dharma-cult. We have specimens here and there in the *Shunya-Puran* of a very abstruse language, which have nevertheless retained the characteristics of our language. The Dohas are not like the aphorisms and wise sayings of Dak and Khana, some of which represent the earliest form of our literary Bengali.

The Dohas may be the contemporary of some of the above schools of our early literature, and it will not be difficult to discover in the literatures of these schools some specimens of an old and antiquated style current from the 8th to the 12th century. But the Dohas occupy a totally isolated place of their own, not bearing any distinctive sign of agreement with the above. All that can be said of Shastri's collections is that they stand in the borderland of transition of one or other form of Prakrit developing the characteristics of some of the dialects of Eastern Provinces, and in Kahnapada's Dohas the language is more akin to Bengali than to any other. They should not be called Bengali, however allied their language may appear to be to occasional phrases and expressions of old Bengali : they represent the state of the written form of Ardhamagadhi in the melting pot. If they are to be given any nomenclature, they should be called Prakrit or Apabhramsa, by which names they were known at the time of their composition.

Why did Bengali, after it had developed all its characteristics, differentiating it from the other provincial languages, still continue to be called Prakrit ? The reason is, we suppose, that at one time before the 10th century, the non-Sanskritic languages of Eastern India were all known by the traditional name of Prakrit. This was the popular view. But it will be wrong to call Bengali of the 17th century Prakrit, though Rajendra Das and others called it so. It will be equally wrong to call the Dohas Bengali, though we may occasionally come across old Bengali forms in them. For Bengali had not at the time got any name for recognition as a separate language. The Dohas show the progressive tendency of the Apabhramsa to assimilate some further traits of the spoken dialect, and as the background from which our ever-shifting syntactical rules and inflectional forms are best shown at their early stages, they are highly important for the purposes of comparative study and for solution of the complicated problem of the origin and development of our language.

6. Dharma-mangal Poems

Mayur Bhatta.

The authors of Dharma-mangal poems, written in honour of the god Dharma, unanimously agree in declaring Mayur Bhatta to be the earliest writer on the subject. The poem which is said to have furnished inspiration to the succeeding poets of the Dharma-cult was called the *Hakanda Puran*. Nagendranath Vasu considers the *Shunya-Puran* by Ramai Pandit to be identical with the *Hokanda Puran*.[1] But we do not agree to this theory, as the subject treated in most of the Dharmamangal poems is quite different from what we find in the *Shunya-Puran*. Besides the name "Hakanda Puran" is evidently associated with the superhuman sacrifices of Lau Sen at

[1] See Preface to the Shunya-Puran.

Hakanda, and of this song Ramai Pandit was not certainly the apostle.

The Dharma-mangal poems were originally Buddhistic in spirit but they passed through great changes in the hands of the Hindu priests. Most of the Dharma-mangal poems give a description of the heroic achievements of Lau Sen, the King of Maina, who flourished in the 11th century A.D. I briefly summarise the tale below :—

The story of Dharma-mangal

In the reign of Gaudesvar, son of Dharmapal II, Emperor of Gaud, there lived one Soma Ghosh, who was originally a menial servant in his palace. He ingratiated himself into the confidence of the Emperor and secured for himself a landed property at Dhekur on the river Ajay. The son of Soma Ghosh was Ichhai Ghosh, who was a great warrior and a devout worshipper of the Goddess Kali. He gradually asserted his independence and in spite of all remonstrance offered by his father, declared war against the Emperor of Gaud. The Emperor sent several expeditions to put down the revolt but all failed. Karna Sen, King of Mainagarh, a feudatory chief, was summoned to help the Emperor in this crisis. Karna Sen, accompanied by his four sons, went to the battlefield, but was vanquished in war and all his sons were killed. He returned to his capital to witness the death of his Queen, who succumbed to grief owing to the loss of her sons. Karna Sen, who was now old, went to Gaud under these overwhelming bereavements, with a view to meeting the monarch and acquainting him with the dire loss that had befallen him in his expedition. The Emperor of Gaud was naturally moved to hear the sad tale, and tried to think how best he could soothe his friend in the despair thus brought upon him by his fidelity to the throne of Gaud. The Emperor had a sister-in-law, a young maiden of remarkable beauty. He asked Karna Sen to marry her. Karna Sen, as we have said, "was already declined in the vale of years"; but he obeyed the royal command, and married the beautiful maiden, whose name was Ranjavati. Lau Sen, the

hero of *Dharmamangal*, was born to this married couple. It is said that his mother Ranjavati went through various ordeals and superhuman sacrifices in order to propitiate Dharma, one of these being self-destruction at the stake. This she passed through, but was restored to life by the mercy of the God, who was pleased to grant her the boon of a son.

With the help of Lau Sen, the Emperor of Gaud succeeded in putting down Karpurdhala, King of Kamrup (Assam), who had rebelled against him. He also sent Lau Sen to punish King Haripal who had refused the old Emperor's proposal to marry his young and beautiful daughter Kanera. A battle ensued, in which the army was led to the field by the lovely princess herself. The encounter between her and our hero was sharp and animated, but she could not long withstand the superior skill and heroism of Lau Sen, and King Haripal was ultimately forced to submit. Kanera was, however, given in marriage to Lau Sen with the consent of the Emperor. But Lau Sen's great achievement was the conquest of Dhekur. Ichhai Ghosh, who had baffled all attempts of the Emperor to bring him to submission, by destroying the vast armies sent at various times for the purpose, was killed by Lau Sen in a pitched battle

Besides these historical events, the poems give accounts of very mean plots and machinations to kill Lau Sen, by Mahudya, the brother-in-law and Prime Minister of the Emperor of Gaud. Lau Sen was Mahudya's nephew, being his sister's son. The marriage of his sister Ranjavati with Karna Sen, who was old and decrepit, had not been approved of by him, and though it had been celebrated under the orders of the Emperor, yet her brother tried his best to dissuade Ranja from going to Mainagarh with her husband. Ranja did not listen to her brother's counsel, but firmly told him that, as Karna Sen was now her lord—young or old, it mattered not to her—she was bound to follow him wherever he might go. In great anger Mahudya cursed his sister, saying that no child would be born to her. Hence when her son was actually born, and prince Lau Sen grew to be a handsome

young hero with courage and spirit for any enterprise, a deep-seated rage rankled in his uncle's bosom. There are hundreds of incidents in the poems, describing the plots formed by Mahudya to assassinate Lau Sen, and last though not least was a command issued by the Emperor of Gaud, at the instigation of the Prime Minister, calling upon Lau Sen to go to Hakanda and fulfil certain impossible conditions for the propitiation of the God Dharma. These involved a severe course of penances, and required that the prince should make the sun rise from the west. If he should not be able to satisfy the King by this, he was to lose his head. When Lau Sen had gone to Hakanda on this strange mission, Mahudya led an army to Mainagarh and laid siege to his capital. The brave and heroic sacrifices of Lakha Dumani, wife of Kalu Dom, and those of his son Saka, with the wonderful spirit of devotion to truth shown by Kalu in the sacrifice of his life in this crisis, are graphically described by all the poets of *Dharma-mangal*. The trials and temptations which beset Lau Sen in his early youth—the court of Surikshya, the coquettish Queen, the manners of Nayani, the lewd Barui woman—are all full of interest for us as shedding light on various points of domestic and court life in Bengal in those days. Lau Sen eventually comes out triumphant, by the favour of Dharma, and by dint of his wonderful devotion and strength of character.

Of these poems it may be said in the language of a poet that "truth that is, and truth that seems, blend in a fantastic strife" in the incidents described.

The historical aspects of the poems.

Such, briefly, is the subject-matter of the Dharma-mangal poems. The subject is a historical one. The ruins of Lau Sen's palace may still be seen at Mainagarh in Tamluk. The fort of the great Ichhai Ghosh, who offered fierce resistance to the Emperor of Gaud in the 11th century, is also lying in ruins on the banks of the Ajay in the District of Bankura. The temple of Kali, called Shyamrupa, worshipped by Ichhai, is also to be seen in that place, which is still full of the tradition of the prowess and heroic deeds of the glorious

rebel. The image of Dharma-Thakur in the form of a tortoise, and a temple dedicated to it by Lau Sen, may be seen in Mainagarh. In the list of the most prominent Indian Emperors of the Kali-Yuga, furnished by our household almanacs, the name of Lau Sen occurs along with those of Raja Yudhisthir, Mahipal and Akbar. Haripal, against whom Lau Sen fought, lent his name to his capital in Simulia on the river Brahmani. The ruins of the outer courts of his palace, called the Bahir-Khanda, are still to be found in this village of Haripal. The river Brahmani, on which it once stood, has, however, been completely silted up. Old Simulia is now indicated by Simulgarh, which represents the once-fortified portion of the capital of Haripal.

That the names of Luichandra, Mahudya, Lohata, Jallan-Sekar, Kanera, Kalinga and Samola are those of historical personages, appear from their very antiquated Prakrita forms. They could not have been invented by any poet within the last seven hundred years. The refined classical taste of the poets of the Renaissance period would not have permitted them to adopt these names in their poems if they had not been historical.

These rustic epics of Dharma-mangal were recited and sung by rural folk in early times, and as such cannot perhaps claim any high literary merit. But they are full of valuable references to the period before the Mohammadan conquest, and as our knowledge of that period is scanty, they possess an undoubted interest for the student of history.

The extent of the kingdom of the Emperors of Gaud.

It appears from them that the Emperor of Gaud—styled 'পঞ্চগৌড়েশ্বর,' King of the five Gauds, or 'Lord of the five Indies,' as Beal has translated it—was the actual sovereign-head of Bengal, Orissa and Kamrup. The Kings of Cooch Behar, Assam, Barendra Desh, Shollipur, Kainjhora, Simulia, Mainagarh, Doluipur and other places, were all his vassals, and assembled under his banner at his summons. The royal seat of the Kings of Gaud was at Ramati, which is an abbreviation of the Ramavati mentioned in the copper-plate inscription of Madanpal. This was either an

earlier name, or a part of the city of Gaud. We also find, in the feudal organisation of the Empire, that Doms and Chandals formed the main personal army of the Emperors and their devotion to the King furnishes the poets with many extraordinary examples of courage and heroism.

Bara-Bhuiyans.

We have read of the Bara-Bhuiyans or twelve 'lords of the land' of Bengal, who wielded great power in the country during Mohammadan times. But the custom of having twelve sub-lords attached to a paramount court did not originate in India during the Mohammadan period. It is one of the oldest institutions of the Indo-Aryans. In the Codes of Manu and Shukracharyya, we find references to *Dwadasa Mandalesvaras*, which show that a great empire used to be divided into twelve sub-divisions or provinces, each under its own Chief, who was bound to serve the Emperor, to attend his court and to acknowledge him as his feudal overlord. The *Dodecapolis* of the Greeks corresponds to this institution. During the reign of Darius, these twelve lords became so powerful as to assert their independence and cause considerable trouble to the State. The custom of appointing twelve Chiefs attached to the Durbar is even now prevalent in various States in Rajputana, and this is also the practice in the court of the Maharaja of Tripura which even now retains some of the most ancient usages of early Hindu Kings.* In all the ballads of Dharma-mangal we find frequent mention of these twelve lords, who are described as discharging important political functions in the court of the Emperors of Gaud. They appeared to be the pillars of the State, and, in the confidence and honour with which they were treated at court, seemed to have been second only to the Prime Minister and to the feudatory Chiefs. Certain functions were theirs which no one else could perform.

* For example, it is customary with the Tripura Rajas to enquire if any person dwelling in the Raj has not had his daily meal, before the Raja breaks his own fast, which he does at a very late hour of the day. This practice which, no doubt, originated from highly humanitarian principles, has now been reduced to a mere formal observance.

At the time of the King's coronation, for instance, it was their privilege to pour on his head the sacramental water of the *abhiseka*. At the time of marriage of the Emperor or his eldest son, they had the right of garlanding the newly-married couple.

The descriptions of the royal courts, with which these poems abound, give us glimpses of important administrative forms prevalent during the Hindu period of Indian history, though subsequent writers did not fail to introduce some features of the Mohammadan Durbar in their descriptions.

The chief writers of Dharma-mangal.

Mayur Bhatta, as we said, was the earliest writer of *Dharmamangal* and probably lived in the twelfth century. After him, came Khelaram, Manik Ganguli, Rupram, Ramchandra, Shyam Pandit, Ramdas Adak, Sahadev Chakravarti, Ghanaram and other writers, who gradually Hinduised the Buddhistic tales originally written to glorify Dharma-Thakur. We shall notice their works in a subsequent chapter.

7. The Ballads and Songs in Honour of the Pal Kings and the Local Rajas

The popularity of the Pal Kings

In *Chaitanya-Bhagabat*, a Bengali work of authority with the Vaishnavas, the author Vrindavan Das (born 1507 A.D.) refers to the great favour in which the ballads in praise of some of the Pal Kings were held in Bengal. The copper-plate inscription of Madanpal corroborates the truth of this statement so far as Mahipal was concerned. The inscription says that the valorous and chivalric career of Mahipal, who was like a second Shiva, formed a favourite theme for popular songs in Bengal. We have an old Bengali saying which ridicules the practice of singing the songs of Mahipal at the time of husking rice. Later, when Shaivaite ideas became fashionable, the name of Shiva was substituted for that of Mahipal. All these things go to show that the Buddhist monarchs of Bengal, about whom no chronicler came forward to write biographical or

historical accounts—whom the Brahmanic School, while eulogising a Vallal Sen or a Lakshman Sen beyond all measure, completely ignored—must have left indelible marks on the popular mind by the greatness of their character and public works. Immense tanks, for instance, in the Districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur, still attest to the philanthropic spirit by which the Pal Kings endeared themselves to the millions of subjects over whom they ruled.

The language of the songs greatly modernised.

The popular songs in honour of the Pal Kings were, no doubt, composed shortly after their death. The shape in which we find them now, however, is certainly not so old. The language has been considerably modernised, and here, as in the case of the *Shuyna-Puran*, we come, now and again, upon inadequate traces of the ancient originals. The ballads used to be sung in chorus by professional minstrels amongst the admiring rural folk with whom they were so popular, and this fact accounts for the changes wrought in their versions from age to age, to suit the understanding of the people.

Manikchandra Rajar Gan.

Manikchandra Rajar Gan (or the Song of Manikchandra Raja) was first published by Dr. G. A. Grierson in the Asiatic Society's *Journal* (Vol. I, Part III, 1878). Raja Manikchandra ruled in Northern Bengal during the first half of the 11th century, and the work in question must have been composed shortly after his death.

The crudeness of the song.

There is not much that is intrinsically poetic in this ballad. It displays the unrestrained imagination of a rustic author. The miracles attributed to Hadi-siddha remind one of the wonders performed by *Danhas* or some other *djinn* in the *Arabian Nights*. Gods and men alike seem to be subject to the influences of Tantrik rites which create marvels at every step. But we occasionally catch glimpses of historical truth from incidental descriptions. The Government revenue of those days was collected in cowries and was mainly conducted by a system of barter. The higher classes

seem to have been immensely rich, and we find frequent descriptions of food being served to them on heavy golden plates. Their dinners were considered incomplete without at least some fifty different dishes, the tradition of which is not altogether unknown to our housewives even to this day.

The similes and metaphors used in the descriptions are very commonplace, and show that these rural folk were completely ignorant of those classical standards which now permeate even the lowest stratum of Hindu society. The beautiful teeth of Raja Gopichandra's wife are compared to Sola (bark of the cork-plant). Nowadays, a peasant of even the most backward of Bengal village would compare them to the seeds of a pomegranate, after the classical style. This also indicates a historical point. In those days when these songs were composed the profuse use of betel was unknown in the Himalayan valleys.

The redeeming feature. Queen Aduna's grief.

This perfectly artless song, in spite of its crudeness, is, however, redeemed by pathos which bursts forth in the cry of love of Aduna, the abandoned wife of Gopichandra. He turns ascetic and is about to leave her; she falls at his feet in tears, and with the devotion and loving entreaty of a gentle Hindu wife, says to her husband * :—

"Leave me not ,O King, for some distant exile.

"For whom have I built this cool house, this bungalow, spacious and beautiful beyond description! Will you desert me in my youth ?—alas! vain is then my youth.

* "না যাইও না যাইও রাজা দূর দেশান্তর।
কারে লাগিয়া বান্ধিলাম শীতল মন্দির ঘর।
বান্ধিলাম বাঙ্গালা ঘর নাই পাড় কালি।
এমন বয়সে ছাড়ি যাও আমার বুথা পাবুরাণী।
নিন্দের স্বপনে রাজা হব দরিশন।
পালঙ্কে ফেলাইব হস্ত নাই প্রাণের ধন।
দশ গিরির মাও বইন রবে স্বামী লইবে কোলে।
আমি নারী রোদন করিব খালি ঘর মন্দিরে।

" How often shall I stretch out my hand in the bed and miss you, O jewel of my heart !

" In the homes of my neighbours, women, young and old, will have their husbands by their sides.

" My lot it will be to weep alone in an empty house.

" O King, let me go with you.

" If only I am with you, I can guard your precious life.

" I shall cook for you when you are hungry.

" I shall offer you water when you are a-thirst.

" With laughter and gentle play, how many hours will pass !

" Walking in the open fields, we shall talk merrily, and know no weariness.

" But when we approach the houses of men, I shall declare you to be my *guru*, my master.

" When you desire to rest, I shall spread a cool mat for you, and you shall recline on a pillow, while I in happy mirthfulness slowly press with my hands your hands and feet.

" When the summer is hot, I shall gently fan you, and in the cold month of Magh, I shall cover you with warmth."

Gopichandra remonstrates, saying that an ascetic's lot is hard, and he will have to traverse forests infested with tigers and other wild beasts.

আমাকে সঙ্গে করি লইয়া যাও ॥
জীয়ব জীবন ধন আমি কন্যা সঙ্গে গেলে।
রাঁধিয়া দিমু অন্ন ক্ষুধার কালে ॥
পিপাসার কালে দিমু পানী।
হাসিয়া খেলিয়া পোহামু রজনী ॥
আইল পাতার দেখিলে কথা কহিয়া যামু।
গিরি লোকের বাড়ী গেলে গুরুস্থান বলিমু ॥
শীতল পাটি বিছায়া দিমু বালীসে হেলান পাও।
হাউস রঙ্গে বাতিমু হস্ত পাও ॥
গ্রীষ্মকালে বদনত দিমু হও পাখার বাও।
মাঘ মাসি সিতে ঘেবিয়া রমু গাও ॥ "

The Queen says in reply* : " These are false excuses to put me off.

" Who would believe in such nonsense as this?

" When was it ever heard of that a woman was killed by a tiger while in the company of her husband ?

" But even if a tiger kills me, I fear it not. I shall die without stain in the eyes of the people, and at the feet of my husband.

" You will be to me as a fig tree and I as a creeper unto you.

" I cling to your beautiful feet, O, how can you desert me ?

" While I was yet a maiden in my father's house, why did you not, O my pious prince, turn ascetic and renounce the world ?

" Now I have attained to womanhood and am worthy of your love.

" If you leave me now, I shall kill myself with sorrow."

Govindachandra Rajar Gan by Durlabh Mallik.

In a similar ballad, which gives an account of Govindachandra Raja, who is identical with Raja Gopichandra, the poet Durlabh Mallik, recasting the song in comparatively modern times, describes Queen Aduna's sorrows in somewhat the same way.

* " কে কয় এ গুলা কথা কে আর পইতায়।
পুরুষের সঙ্গে গেলে কি স্ত্রীক বাঘে ধরে খায়।
ও গুলি কথা কুটমুট পালাবার উপায়॥
খায় না কেন বনের বাঘ তাক নাই ডর।
নিত্ত কলঙ্কে মরণ হউক স্বামীর পদতল॥
তুমি হবু বটবৃক্ষ আমি তোমার লতা।
রাঙ্গা চরণ বেড়িয়া লমু পালাইয়া যাবু কোথা॥
যখন আছিনু আমি মা বাপের ঘরে।
তখন কেন ধর্ম্মি রাজা না গেলেন সন্ন্যাসী হয়ে॥
এখন হইনু রূপর নারী তোরে যোগ্যমান।
মোক ছাড়িয়া হবু সন্ন্যাস মুই ভেজিমু পরাণ॥ "

When all importunities had failed and the King could not be moved from his resolution to go alone*—

"Queen Aduna fell on the earth, crying alas! alas!

"Her lamentations would have melted a stone.

"The citizens assembled and began to shed tears for their King's departure.

"Children, old men, youths, and women all began to weep.

"The very ocean seemed to move in surging waves, at the sight of the sorrow of the Queen.

"The horses and elephants wept silently in the stables.

"The birds 'Sari' and 'Suk' wept in their cages and would not touch their food.

"The maidens who attended on the Queen began to lament loudly.

"The Queen herself threw away her ornaments.

"In great affliction she threw away her jewels.

"She wiped away the sacred vermilion from her forehead.

"From her nose she drew off the Besar, and from her feet she threw away the Nupur.

* "হায় হায় কন্যা রাণী ধূলায় লুটায়।
উচ্চনার রোদনে পাষাণ গল্যা যায়॥
কান্দয়ে নগরবাসী রাজা পানে চায়া।
বাল বৃদ্ধ যুবা কান্দে আর শিশু ম্যায়া॥
রাণীর ক্রন্দনে নদী উথলে সাগর।
পাইসালে কান্দে অশ্ব যতেক কুঞ্জর॥
শারি শুয়া পক্ষী কান্দে না করে আহার।
দাসীগণ কান্দে রাজার করি হাহাকার॥
খসাইয়া ফেলে হার কেয়ুর কঙ্কণ।
অভিমানে দূর করে যত আভরন॥
পুঁছিয়া ফেলিল সব সিঁথার সিন্দুর।
নাকের বেসর ফেলে পায়ের নুপুর॥
রাজার চরণে পড়ে জড়ায়ে কুন্তল।
মোরা সঙ্গে যাব রাজা দেশান্তরে চল॥"

"In utter woe she fell at the King's feet, covering them with her dishevelled hair and, crying again and again, 'O King! let me go with you."

The doctrine Shunyabad.

The Shunyabad, or doctrine of primæval nothingness, which, as we have said in a preceding paragraph, characterises the Mahayana school of Buddhists, is preached in this poem by the great sage Hadipa and there are numerous other evidences of Buddhistic influence in it.

The capital of Gopichandra. His great renunciation a subject of national sorrow.

The capital of Govindachandra Raja is described as situated at the town of Patika, which has been identified with Paitkapara under the police-station of Jaldhaka in the District of Rangpur. The renunciation of Raja Gopichandra created a sensation all over India, which, even at this distance of time, continues to be echoed in poems and dramas written in the Hindi and Maharatti languages. A picture by Ravi Varma, representing Gopichandra on the point of deserting his Queen and palace, commanded a large sale all over India.

A recent edition of the songs.

The late Babu Bishweswar Bhattacharyya, B.A., when he was Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Nilphamari in the District of Rangpur, collected from Northern Bengal and edited a number of old and rare songs in honour of the Pal Kings.* The book has recently been published by the Calcutta University.

The recent discoveries and researches in regard to the historical references in the ballads of Manikchandra and Gopichandra do not indicate any decisive result. It is said that Raja Harischandra of Sabhar had two daughters, Aduna and Paduna. This Raja, we know for certain, ruled at Sabhar in the

* Nagendranath Vasu discovered several versions of songs about Govindachandra Raja, from the villages of Orissa. These versions appear to be more correct and reliable than their Bengali prototypes. The custodians of the songs there have as in Bengal, been, the Yogis who doubtless formed an important class in the Buddhist society. In Orissa they are called Bauris.

Dacca District and was a Buddhist. His accomplished daughter Aduna was married to Raja Gopichandra, and Paduna, her sister, according to a custom prevalent in some of the Northern districts of our country, was given as a dowry to the prince. Raja Gopichandra, it is said, was the son of Manikchandra, a scion of Chandra Dynasty, of Bikrampur of whom, Srichandra's inscriptions were discovered in recent years. It is also said that Gopichandra was connected with Bhartrihari by blood. Gopichandra's mother, Mainamati, after whom a hill of the district of Tippera is named, was a disciple of Gorakshanath, who, along with Hadisiddha, Chowrangi and Adinath preached the Nath-cult of Bengal. In the Nath-cult, founded by Minanath, who received his Mahajnan (esoteric inspiration) direct from Shiva himself, Buddhism and Shaivaism were intermixed and the followers of the cult had a greaf hold over the masses of this province. The creed of Gorakshanath, a disciple of Minanath, spread up to the Punjab on the North and to the limits of the Bombay Presidency in the South. Raja Ravi Varma of Travancore, as we have stated, painted a picture of Raja Gopichandra on the eve of his renunciation which received high appreciation from all parts of India received. We also know that Gopichandra was the hero of a drama staged at Bombay some years ago, and many ballads and songs about this prince in Oriya language were current in Orissa in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some of the songs of Gopichandra were published in Hindi from Bhagalpur and Lahore. The extensive propularity of these songs in the eleventh and twelveth centuries was due to the preachings of Gorakshanath and his followers. Gorakshanath himself hailed from Jullundur in the Punjab, though the chief centre of his activity was Bengal, where ballads and songs in his honour are as plentiful "as autumnal leaves in Vallombrosa."

Some scholars have identified Gopichandra with Govindachandra of the Tirumalaya Inscription of Rajendra Chola. There are some references in the Bengali ballads which seem to substantiate this identification. But all these historical findings

are not yet conclusive. There are points of controversy and the opinions of scholars have not yet approached a unanimity on this knotty historical poem. But one thing is clear—that this Gopichandra was not a scion of the Pal Kings of Bengal, as was formerly believed.

8. Shaiva-cult—how it Faced Buddhism

Shiva as Rudra Deva.

It was to the growing influence of the Shaiva religion that Buddhism eventually succumbed in India. The conception of Shiva, as we find it in the Puranas, is grand beyond all description. In the Vedic literature he had been known as Rudra Deva. There he was the God of Destruction, awe-inspiring, with four arms, each of which held a different weapon, and amongst which his Trident and the Pinak carried at their points the grim terrors of death. The movements of this God, in infinite celestial space, made the great planets crush each other, and his trident pierced the elephants who supported the ten points of the compass. All other gods fell on their knees, and cried for protection, when Shiva danced in wild and destructive ecstacy at the time of the final dissolution of the universe.

The Pauranic conception borrowed from Buddhism.

But the Puranas completely changed the Great God. We have heard of the fiery planets growing cold with lapse of time in the celestial regions, the pleasant verdure of shrubs and plants covering those orbs from which once emanated sparks of living fire. The God Shiva has passed through a similar transformation. In the Pauranic age he is represented as the very personification of calmness. The destructive elements have all been eliminated, and he is now quiet and dignified, absorbed in Samadhi. This Samadhi is akin to the Nirvana of the Buddhists. The Great God is above all desire, as was Buddha : Shiva kills Madana, the God of Love, of whom another name is Mara, and Buddha's struggles with Mara and eventual conquest over him are well-known. He is represented as an ascetic with the beggar's bowl in his hand.

He has a golden palace at Kailasa ; and Kuvera, the Lord of Wealth, is in charge of his store. But the Great God has nothing to do with wealth. He lives by begging, sleeps in the burning ground and remains absorbed in contemplation. In this respect also, he was verily like Buddha, who, though a prince, left the palace of Kapilavastu to embrace the life of a bhikshu. Shiva's company is sought for by the resplendent gods of heaven, but ghosts and goblins are his companions. Buddha, though a prince, mixed with the poor and the lowly, and thus showed that he scorned none.

Shiva drinks poison to save the world.

When the ocean was churned by the gods, Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, arose from it, and Vishnu seized her as his prize ; the great diamond Kaustubha also fell to his share. The majestic elephant Airavata, the incomparable horse Uchchaihshrava, and the celestial Parijata tree, which arose next from the ocean, were given to the God Indra. Last, though not least, appeared that ambrosia which had the effect of giving immortality to those who partook of it. This was divided amongst all the assembled gods equally. Shiva, meanwhile, remained in Kailasa, absorbed in Samadhi, caring not whether the universe were lost or gained by the other gods. But at a second churning of the ocean, from which the gods had expected yet more prizes, streams of deadly poison issued from it in overwhelming quantities, with clouds of smoke that looked like curling snakes. This threatened to flood the universe and destroy it. The gods were awe-struck. They knew not how to protect the world from the destruction which seemed to be impending. In their despair, they called on Shiva to save creation. The Great God's heart was moved with compassion. He gathered the floods of poison in his outstretched palms and drank it all up, in the presence of the wondering gods. But the poison he drank left a blue mark on his throat, and so he is called Nilakantha or the Blue-throated. This episode is narrated in such a manner in the Puranas that it seems to me to be analogous to the story of pain and sacrifice undergone by Buddha, who suffered for the sake of suffering humanity.

His figure compared to Mount Himalaya.

Let us picture to ourselves the image of the great Shiva. He is like a mountain of white marble, tranquilly seated in the posture of Samadhi. On his forehead is the crescent moon. From his matted locks flows the pure stream of the Ganges, that Goddess whom his mercy melts into an unceasing fountain of white waters. In this attitude he may be compared very aptly to some great peak of the Himalayas, with the young moon shining above its cloudy height, and the perennial flow of the Ganges pouring over its steep regions. The heads of venomous snakes peep out of the locks of Shiva, as they do from the recesses of the great mountains. The image of Shiva, as made in clay and marble in the villages, shows the quietness and composure of Buddha, and both are now so like one another! Yet nothing could have been more dissimilar than the original conception of Rudra Deva, the Shiva of the Vedas.

Myth and history confounded in India.

The best points of Buddha's life are ascribed to Shiva. The Puranas represent him as embodying all the attributes of Buddha's greatness. One point may be urged in favour of Buddha. He was a living person of flesh and blood, and as such, the influence of his sternly real personality might be presumed to produce far greater results than that of a mythological God. In India, however, this matter is viewed in a different light. Here, when a saint or a great religious teacher dies, he is at once deified. He becomes one of the glorious gods, and in popular estimation he occupies a place not far remote from that ascribed to the celestials. On the other hand, thousands of men and women in India believe in every word of the Puranas. To them Shiva is as real as any historical personage. Buddha, though deified, could not claim the grandeur of the background which sets forth the luminous figure of the great God of the Hindu Trinity. Infinite space, the whole of heaven and earth and the solar regions, are represented as the incidents of that background. Shiva has no birth, no death; his eyes never close, they are raised heavenward, lost in celestial reverie, and they

scarcely look down towards this mundane world of ours, except for the sake of mercy. Buddha, already divested of his original glory, and reduced to Dharma-Thakur, became quite lustreless in the eyes of the people, before this great and resplendent divinity of the Hindus.

The domestic virtues extolled in the Shaiva religion.

Shiva has one element, however, which is wanting in the conception of Buddha. This is the sanctity of the nuptial vow, which sheds glory on his abode at Kailasa. Buddha's emancipation could not be complete without deserting a devoted and loving wife. But Shiva and Durga, the ideal couple, cannot be dissociated from one another. Durga, who is also called Sati and Annapurna, is the Goddess who distributes rice to the hungry. To the world she is as mother, who cares not for herself, but for her children only; and Shiva is the ideal of a Hindu householder, never ruffled in temper, immovable, immaculate and merciful—their union representing the fulfilment of the spiritual vows given and accepted in marriage, that the two will live for each other and for others. How perfect this mutual love was, is proved in the death of Sati. Her devotion to Shiva was so great that she could not bear to hear him abused by her father Daksha. Feeling that the blood of the defamer of her lord ran in her own veins, she considered her body itself as unholy, and gave it up in a flash, to be born again as a daughter of Himabat. In this new life she passed through severe penances and sacrifices, to be worthy of being united in marriage to Shiva In the stoical asceticism of Buddha, these domestic features find no place, and while assimilating the quintessence of Buddhism, the Shaiva religion has this point in addition, which at once appealed to the Hindus, a people conspicuous for their strong domestic instincts.

Buddhism, as presented to us on the eve of its downfall, combined sceptical views with gross superstition. The light that it had given to India, had spent itself in ages gone by, and in the shape in which it existed latterly, could scarcely commend itself to the Indian people, accustomed as they were to live in a highly

spiritual atmosphere. Dharma and Shiva, in the popular notions of the period, appeared as very humble deities, whose function suited the requirements of the rustic folk who worshipped them.

The oldest songs of Shiva.

The oldest songs relating to Shiva, which fall within the scope of this chapter, show nothing of that high conception of him which distinguished the period of the Pauranic Renaissance. They were meant for Bengali villagers, and Shiva figures in them as assisting in the work of the rice-fields, and even ploughing them himself like any peasant. Even in the *Shunya-Puran*, there is a song devoted to Shiva in his agricultural capacity, from which we may take the following extract * :—

Shiva figures as a peasant.

"The Lord is without any raiment.
"He begs from door to door.
"At dawn of day he rises, and goes out to beg.

* "জখন আছেন গোসাঞি হয়া দিগম্বর।
ঘরে ঘরে ভিখা মাগিয়া বুলেন ঈশ্বর॥
রজনী পরভাতে ভিক্‌খার লাগি যাই।
কুথাএ পাই অন্ন কুথাএ না পাই॥
হস্তকী বওড়া তাহে করি দিনপাত।
কত দিবস গোসাঞি ভিক্‌খাএ ভাত॥
আজ্ঞার বচনে গোসাঞি তুষ্নি চস চাস।
কখন অন্ন হএ গোসাঞি কখন উপবাস॥
পুখরি কাঁদাএ লইব ভূম খানি।
আরসা হইলে জেন ছিচএ দিব পানি॥
ঘরে ধান থাকিলেক পরভু সুখে অন্ন খাব।
অন্নর বিহনে পরভু কত দুঃখ পাব॥
কাপাস চসহ পরভু পরিব কাপড়।
কত না পরিব গোঁসাই কেওলা বাঘের ছড়॥
তিল সরিষা চাস কর গোঁসাই বলি তব পাএ।
কত না মাখিব গোঁসাই বিভূতিগুলা গাএ॥
সকল চাস চস পরভু আর কইও কলা।
সকল দস্থ পাই যেন ধর্ম্ম পূজার বেলা॥"

Shunya-Puran.

"Some people give him alms; by others he is refused. Sometimes he lives on *bayra** and *haritaki*† only. But Oh, how happy is he when they give him the beggar's rice!

"I say unto you, O Lord, why don't you plough?

"By begging you often have to fast, and you get rice only now and then.

"You must select a muddy soil for cultivation, but if you cannot secure this, and dry lands fall to your share, you should water them well.

"When you have rice at home, how glad will you be to take your daily meal! How long will you, O Lord, suffer for want of food?

"Why not cultivate cotton, O Lord; how long will you wear a tiger's skin?

"You besmear your body with ashes (*bibhuti*).

"Why not cultivate mustard and *til*.‡ (So that you may have oil to anoint yourself.) And be sure to grow plenty of vegetables. Above all, do not forget banana plants, so that for the Dharma-*puja* nothing may be wanting."

The agricultural aspect of Shiva retained in the later Shivayanas.

In the *Shivayana* or songs of Shiva by later writers, who were the exponents of the Shaiva-cult in Bengal, we find a chapter devoted to Shiva's agricultural speculation and experiences. The traditions about Shiva related in the Puranas have no bearing whatever upon these. We shall here quote a passage from the *Shivayana* of Rameshwar, a writer of the 18th century, which will at once recall the anecdotes of Shiva related in the *Shunya-Puran*. Rameshwar, Kavichandra and other writers, though their own idea of Shiva was of the high classical type, could not help embodying these humble episodes in their descriptions. This shows how greatly the rural people of Bengal favoured them. A song in honour of

* Terminalia belerica.

† Terminalia chebula.

‡ Sesamum orientale.

Shiva, though noble in all respects, would not be perfect in the popular estimation, unless it included these humbler aspects of his character that had found favour in the country for centuries. In that chapter of the *Shivayana*, to which we are referring, Bhima, who first appeared in the *Shunya-Puran* as a devoted servant of Shiva in the rice-fields, still retains the tradition of this character, co-operating with Shiva in his field-labour.*

Shiva sits in the field and says to Bhima the ploughman :—

"Good. In four Dandas' time† you must level the ground perfectly on all sides.

"The rice was planted in several places on the ridges between the furrows, and Shiva, kneeling, applied himself to work with a weeding hook.

"The grasses called Dala-durba and Shyama,‡ Trishira§ and Kesur‖ were weeded out with care, and the straw in the field was quickly cleared. The old fellow¶ would not leave the field for one moment, but kept watch over it like a tiger."

Altogether it is a long description, giving every detail of the field-work of the Bengal peasantry, from which we have taken only the above short extract. Means are suggested for the destruction of the mosquitoes and leeches with which the marshy

* "ক্ষেতে বসি কৃষাণে ঈশান বলে ভাল।
চারিদণ্ডে চৌদ্দিক চৌরস করে চাল॥
আড়ি তুলে ধারে ধারে ধরাইল ধান।
হাটু গাড়ি ঈশানেতে আরম্ভে নিড়ান॥
দল দূর্ব্বা সোলা শ্যামা ত্রিশিরা কেশুর।
খড় খড় নানা খড় উপাড়ে প্রচুর।
বাঘ নাহি বাঘ যেন বসি থাকে বুড়া॥"

Shivayana by Rameswar.

† A Danda is 24 minutes, 7½ Dandas make a Prahar and 4 Praharas make a day (12 hours). Time is reckoned in Bengal villages by this standard even now.

‡ Species of Cyperus.

§ Grass with three blades.

‖ Scirpus kyseer.

¶ Shiva is here meant.

fields of Lower Bengal, are infested, and other precautions are given by which the peasant may secure a good harvest. From the language in which these episodes are couched, I am inclined to believe that they formed part of some old song of Shiva which Rameshwar was incorporating in his poem without much revision. There are many passages such as—

" বারটি বারঠে চেকুড়ার ঝড়াউড়ি।
গুলামুখি পাতিমারে পুতে বার মুড়ি।"

—which it is difficult to explain, because of the antiquated words and provincialisms used—presumably peculiar to the locality in which the author lived. The somewhat revolting story of the intrigue with Durga, in the guise of a Bagdini woman, which is told of Shiva by these writers, must also be referred for its origin to the late Buddhistic age. They incorporated in their songs tales which had been prevalent amongst the rustic people of Bengal at that period, when moral ideas became confused under Tantrik influences.

The story of the Bagdini woman

Three elements are found in the later Shiva-poems: (1) There is the Pauranic element, with its grand conception of Shiva, which, as I have said in the foregoing pages, shows traces of the spiritual influence of Buddha's life. (2) We have the humbler attributes of the divinity, ascribed to him by villagers and peasants under Tantrik influences. (3) Again, counteracting these last, we have the purity and perfection of family relationships, as represented in the ideal Hindu household. Here in spite of many conflicting interests of the undivided family, the presence of its head brings harmony and peace—the result of that spirit of forbearance that he has gained by the long habit of viewing all mundane concerns from a lofty spiritual standpoint. Here the mistress of the household, inspired only by holy love, lives entirely for her lord, for her children and for others, without a thought of personal comforts—a perfect picture of patient endurance and unflagging devotion.

The domestic elements develop in Bengali poems.

In Bengali songs of Shiva, this last trait reaches a high stage of development, showing the peculiar bent of our vernacular genius in conceiving and idealising purely domestic subjects.

Kailasa—the heaven of Shiva.

Kailasa, the city of Shiva, is the abode of bliss, where gold and lead have the same value, where the tiger and the lamb, the mongoose and the serpent are friends and drink from the same fountain, forgetting their natural enmity. The love, harmony and tranquillity which pervade Mount Kailasa, are all inspired by Mahadeva himself, whose holy dwelling-place is thus strangely unlike the heavens of the other gods, glittering with gold and making the impression of the aggrandised capital of some worldly monarch.

9. Genealogical Records

Achar.

If I am asked as to what is the chief basis of that Pauranic Hinduism which triumphed over Buddhism and has since ruled supreme in India, I should say *Achar*. This word I find difficult to translate into English. It means rules for the guidance of every-day life, to which every Hindu should conform ; yet this definition does not fully express the idea. The word *Achar* refers only to the details of daily life and must not be confounded with questions of morality. A man may not be very moral, and still his life may be *Achara-puta*, or pure as regards the observance of the rules laid down by the Shastras.

Raghunandan and his great work.

The great compiler of these rules in the 16th century in Bengal was Raghunandan Bhattacharyya, and he is up to the present the greatest authority in the country with the orthodox community. To a superficial observer, the Herculean labour undertaken by Raghunandan in collating a vast body of ancient Sanskrit works, in order to settle even very minor points in the every-day life of a Hindu, will appear like lost labour; but diving deeper into the subject, and applying the

principles of historical evolution to it, the reader will find a rational explanation for the popularity of *Astavimsati Tattva*, the great work of Raghunandan, and have to admit that the age was in eminent need of such a scholar. If the country had not wanted him, why should his book have been accepted by the people of Bengal? He certainly did not possess any arbitrary power to enforce his code upon the multitude. They submitted to it willingly.

The contents of Astavimsati Tattva

On particular lunar days, particular foods prove uncongenial to the human system. This is the current belief of Indians. Raghunandan devotes an important chapter of his work to a consideration of this point.* The details of the method for performing Shraddha and other religious ceremonies, for observing fasts and vigils, the restrictions against marriage between people of the same caste and against long journeys by sea or land—such are the subjects which have been treated with patient scholarship in this celebrated work. He quotes chapter and verse from Manu, Yajnavalkya and a host of ancient sages in support of his views, even with regard to very small matters. A giant's labour was given to the raising of a mole-hill. The point that puzzles an enquirer, is how to account for the iron grip in which these rules, occasionally so puerile, have held the orthodox Hindu community for centuries. A devout Hindu would consult the Shastras to know if on a particular day he could eat a certain vegetable. If in the month of Magh a person takes radish, he will be pronounced a non-Hindu. What could be the reason that made people submit to such laws with religious veneration?

How is it that the book carries so great an authority?

* For instance, one should not eat a pumpkin or a gourd (Cucurbita pepo) on the 2nd day of a lunation; Brihati (Solanum hirsutum) on the 3rd; Patal (Trichosanthes dioeca) on the 4th; Radish (Raphanus sativus) on the 5th; Nimba (Melia azadirachta) on the 6th; and so on.

To answer this question, we must survey our social condition during the decline of Buddhism. The great vice which undermined the unity and strength of our society in the last days of Buddhism, was that of free-thinking carried to an excess. The Buddhists preached :—

Free-thinking and its effects on society

"There is no heaven, no hell, no vice, no virtue. None created the world, none has the power to destroy it. No other evidence is to be recognised than what appeals directly to our senses. There is no soul, our body alone is subject to pleasure and pain—the result of good and bad actions. When we see that children are produced by the agency of parents, clay models by potters, and pictures by painters, such evidence is enough to show how things come into existence. Then why should we ascribe them to an imaginary creator ? Don't give pain to yourself or to others. Not depending upon others is salvation. Heaven lies in eating food of delicious taste." *

It is further preached that immorality is no vice, but this particular passage need not be quoted.

* The above is the translation of a passage from **Vidyonmada-Tarangini**, a well-known Sanskrit work by **Chiranjiv Bhattacharyya**. The author gives an interesting description of religious controversies amongst the various sects of Hindus. The above arguments are put in the mouth of a Buddhist. **Vidyonmada-Tarangini** was translated into English by the late **Raja Kali Krishna Dev** of Sobha Bazar, Calcutta, in 1834. The Sanskrit Text of the passage is given below :—

" ন স্বর্গো নৈব জন্মান্তরমপি ন নরকো নাপ্যধর্ম্মো ন ধর্ম্মঃ
কর্ত্তা নৈবাস্য কশ্চিৎ প্রভবতি জগতো নৈব ভর্ত্তা ন হর্ত্তা।
প্রত্যক্ষাদন্য মানং ন সকলফলভুগ্ দেহভিন্নোঽস্তি কশ্চি-
ন্মিথ্যাভূতে সমস্তেঽপ্যনুভবতি জনঃ সর্ব্বমেতদ্বিমোহাৎ॥

অহিংসা পরমো ধর্ম্মঃ পাপমাত্মপ্রপীড়নম্।
অপরাধীনতা মুক্তিঃ স্বর্গোঽভিলষিতাশনম্॥
কা স্বষ্টৌ পরিদেবনা যদি পুনঃ পিণ্ডোদপত্যোদ্ভবঃ।
কুম্ভাদ্যাঃ প্রভবন্তি সন্ততমমী তত্তৎকুলালাদিতঃ॥"

Indiscriminate food.

Now let us imagine the effect of such free-thinking on society. The Tantriks, who were dominant all over India in the age of which we are speaking, were known to banquet on things so horrible as, for instance, a putrid corpse. They wanted to show that in their eyes nothing in creation was unholy. The marriage system had become lax.

Laxity of marriage laws.

During the flourishing days of Buddhism, the different races of Asia had been brought into close touch with one another. The monasteries were filled with men and women of alien races, and when standards of morality sank low in Buddhistic society in course of time, a population, consisting of children disowned by the communities of both their parents, came into existence, and the purity of the four original castes of the Hindus was lost. On an examination of skulls, the Mongolian type has been discovered in high-caste Hindus of various places in India. The Buddhists had no strict code of marriage-laws. In the *Ambatto Sutta* of the Buddhists we find that *Pratiloma*—that reversal of ranks in marriage which is so highly condemned by Hindu law-givers—was at one time greatly in vogue in India. In the drama *Mrichchhakatika* written by a Buddhist prince, we find Charudatta, a good Brahman, paying court to Vasantasena, a courtesan. In the *Dasaratha Jataka* of the Buddhists, Sita is represented as the sister of Rama, who at the same time marries her. These and similar tales are told in a plain way without any comment, thus showing that, in Buddhistic society, rules of marriage were extremely loose.*

The propaganda of the revivalists.

The revival of Hinduism in Bengal, between the 9th and the 13th century, meant war against these laxities introduced by a set of free-thinkers who would submit to no leader but would wreck the whole fabric of society on the quicksands of their own cynicism.

* Similarly, in the history of Java, we find the Buddhist King Jayalankat marrying his own sister Chandra-Sura in 675 A.D.

To preserve the purity of the Aryan blood after the admixture and corruption it had already passed through, to counteract the influence of Tantrikism with its obnoxious idea of indiscriminate food, in a word, to undo the great evils of that age, strict rules regarding marriage and eating required to be enacted, if society was to be ordered and disciplined and led to accept a pure ideal.

When the Hindu revivalists began their task of reformation, they found the original caste-system shattered by the indiscriminate union of men and women. Society was in a thoroughly disorganised state. The children born of couples who came from different castes, were not owned by either of the original castes. The new builders of society classified them, and admitted them into the new order, allotting to each a fixed status in society. This accounts for the origin of so many sub-castes in India. They came into existence by the breaking of the accepted marriage rules.

The origin of the sub-castes

Hindu society, after admitting this heterogeneous population, shut its portals against newcomers, and no breach of the hard and fast rules of marriage now enforced was again to be tolerated. Regarding indiscriminate food, which had been taken in utter disregard of rules of health, minute details were now settled. But the vices to which human nature tends, cannot be checked by mere codes of law. A high ideal of spiritual life set before the people keeps them in the right direction in these matters, and our society busied itself only in framing rules for the direction of the details of daily life. These rules hold their sway till now. If a person openly avows Jesus Christ to be the Son of God or Mohammad to be the only Prophet of God, Hindu society will not war against him. Our toleration goes so far. But there are hundreds of petty rules in regard to eating—especially cooked foods—the infringement of any one of which will render a Hindu liable to be excommunicated from society or will make him undergo severe penances. Marriage rules again have been made so severe that

Hard and fast rules laid down by Raghunandan.

even in the narrow groove of one's own caste, the selection of a bridegroom has grown to be a serious problem with Hindu parents. The reactionary movement, as is natural in such cases, ran to excess, and small points assumed exaggerated proportions in the eyes of the people. Besides the Tantriks, there were other people near at hand, who disregarded prejudices of all kinds, in using meat as food. Buddhism, as I have said, had brought into India a vast number of foreigners belonging to different Asiatic races. There were, amongst these, snake and cockroach eaters, not to speak of those whose daily food was ham and beef. The Hindu community had to be guarded against adopting the ways of such alien peoples, and as the Mohammadan conquerors could not be expected to take any interest in these matters, touching the well-being of the people, the leaders of society became their natural guardians and dictated their actions. Raghunandan compiled a treatise which was much needed in an age of vice, resulting from unrestrained conduct.

Achar an outcome of reactionary measures.

I believe I have now explained what I understand by the word *Achar*, which, I said, is the chief basis of our modern Hindu society. *Achar* is a deliberate disavowal of this spirit of free-thinking. It is a reactionary step, taken to bring a loose and disorganised society into order and unity; and however absurd it may appear on a superficial view, it had a mission at the time when its stringent rules were first enacted; and it cannot be declared with certainty that the good results which the revivalists had in view, are fully exhausted even now.

The topics discussed above should not be considered as a digression, for upon a knowledge of some of the essential features of the revival of Hinduism, will depend a right appreciation of the ideals set up by the succeeding literature.

The qualities required of a Kulin.

Vallal Sen who ruled from 1119 to 1169 A.D. A.D., conferred Kulinism upon people of various castes in Bengal. The qualities required to entitle one to the status of a Kulin were nine, *viz.*, (1) *achar*, (2) humility,

(3) learning, (4) good repute, (5) the visiting of sacred places, (6) devotion, (7) good conduct, (8) religious austerity and penance, and (9) charity. *Achar*, of which we have spoken already, heads the list of these qualities.

Kulinism made hereditary.

Vallal Sen, while bestowing *Kaulinya* (the status of a Kulin) on a few select people of the higher castes, enacted that, after a fixed period, new men endowed with the above qualifications would be admitted into the grade of Kulins, and that these were to be the recognised heads of the different sections of the Hindu community in all social matters. But his son Lakshman Sen afterwards ruled that the descendants of the Kulins were to inherit Kulinism irrespective of their personal qualifications, and thus the Kulin classes, as they are now found, became stereotyped in society. Many books have been preserved in Sanskrit and Bengali, showing the genealogy of the higher classes of the Hindu community; and some of these may be traced to Vallal Sen's time. These give a glimpse of the inside of our social organisation, and indicate the changes which it has undergone during the last one thousand years. The son of a Kulin became a Kulin by right. This contravenes the wholesome principle of rewarding the meritorious members of society, on which Vallal Sen had wanted to base Kulinism. Kulinism thus became an artificial institution, but it had one aspect which still evoked the greatest sacrifices, by developing a peculiar instinct of family honour. The Kulins and the non-Kulins of a community were often bound together by marriage-ties. There were, however, many orthodox families in Bengal who would on no account recognise such relationships. They were prepared to sacrifice every earthly consideration, even their lives, to guard the purity of their Kaulinya status or Kulinism. The lay men of different communities, on the other hand, never lacked patience in their efforts to persuade such orthodox Kulins to marry with them, by offering huge sums of money. We find that a scion of

Genealogical records.

The sacrificing spirit of the Kulins.

the Vaidya Gana family of Tenai in Faridpur was persuaded to marry a girl of the Dasara Dutt family on a dowry of sixty-four villages in the Sub-division of Manikganj in the District of Dacca. The ancestors of the Naikashya Kulins amongst Brahmans of the present day passed through tests and sacrifices such as only martyrs in a great cause would be supposed capable of undergoing. We find one of the lay Vaidyas coming to Senhati to induce a Kulin of that caste to form a matrimonial alliance with him, and persevering in his attempts, in spite of repeated refusals, till some banyan trees, planted by him on the banks of the river Bhairav on his first landing at the place, grew so large as to give shade to travellers, when at last the Kulin agreed to give a daughter of his family in marriage. I find, in the preface to a translation of *Chandi* by Rupnarayan Ghosh (born 1579 A.D.), that a lay Kayastha named Jadavendra Ray, Zemindar of Amdala, in the District of Dacca, took away two young men belonging to a Kulin family in a boat on the river Padma; and there he made a proposal of marriage between them and his two daughters. If they would not agree to his proposals, they were to be drowned in the river. The elder of the two, Vaninath, preferred death to the disgrace that would be brought upon his family by such a connection. He was drowned accordingly. But the younger, Rupram, succumbed to the fear of death and accepted the alternative. We find in the *Kula-Panjika* by Kavi Kanthahar, that a Kulin Vaidya died broken-hearted for having been obliged to marry a tyrant's daughter.* Such instances are numerous in the genealogical books. This goes to show to what excesses the reactionary movement in regard to marriage rules was carried. The genealogical books also show our keen desire to follow ideals of purity and truth in life, and they record the struggle that Hindu society made to ward off the harm that the overtures of an arbitrary Mohammadan aristocracy were constantly making

* "সংগ্রামসাহতনয়াপাণিপীড়নপীড়িতঃ।"

upon their quiet life. If any one wants to study the character of the people of this country, and to understand their aims and aspirations, instead of summarily dismissing them as mysterious beings, he would do well to study these works carefully.

Kavi Kanthahar, Nula Panchanan and others

Kulinism has often been abused; but the sacrifices and martyrdoms undergone for its sake in our society cannot but evoke feelings of wonder and admiration.

The object of such sacrifices may be considered trivial but the qualities of self-denial, of utter disregard for earthly prosperity, and of devotion to a cause which distinguished these Kulins are not to be despised. Just think of a man preferring to wear rags, to depend on a single meal a day, and to live in a hut of reeds, while his brother was made the owner of sixty-four villages and a palace, the same offer coming to him but being refused with indignation. Yet by marriage with a fellow-casteman's daughter, of non-Kulin rank, he would not be excommunicated from society; only a very slight stain would be left on his family honour. Social prestige has in the past occupied the same place in popular estimation in India as a sense of political right does in Western countries; and unless this difference is taken into consideration, the ideals of the Indian people cannot be fully realised.

I said that some of the genealogical treatises may be traced to Vallal Sen's time. The following Bengali lines which occur in a Sanskrit work by Chaturbhuj, a Vaidya, written 375 years ago, were evidently already very old :—

Specimens of early composition in the records.

"ছুহি বিনায়ক ত্রিপুর চাউ।
শিয়াল পন্থ খোবে কাউ।
গৈ লৈয়া কুলের বাস।
রাঢ়ে বঙ্গে সাত আট।"

There are many such lines to be found in other works of this class, which show in their style a striking similarity to *Daker Bachan* and other early compositions.

Early genealogical records in Bengali.

Early genealogical books in Bengali are mostly written in prose. The field has not yet been properly explored; yet the Sanskrit works containing the genealogical records of the three upper classes of our community that have already come to light, form a vast literature. It is not, however, within our scope to refer to Sanskrit works. Of Bengali books on the subject, which are also numerous, we name some below. Though fragments of these writings seem to be ancient, yet their composition as a whole covers a period of not more than four hundred years, closing in the middle of the 18th century.

A list of some.

A few of these Bengali works on our social history are the following :—

1. Melabandha by Devivar Ghatak.
2. Prakriti-Patal-Nirnay by the same author.
3. Kularnav by Vachaspati Mishra.
4. Mela-rahasya by Danujari Mishra.
5. Dasha-Tantra-Prakash by Harihar Kavindra.
6. Melaprakriti-Nirnay.
7. Melamala.
8. Mela-chandrika.
9. Mela-prakash.
10. Dashavati.
11. Kulatattva-Prakashika.
12. Kula-Sar.
13. Pirali-Karika by Nilkantha Bhatta.
14. Goshthikatha and Karika by Nula Panchanan.
15. Radiya Samaj-nirnay.
16. Kula-Panji by Ramdev Acharyya.
17. Radiya Grahavipra- Karika by Kulananda.

18. Grahavipra-kul-vichar by the same author.
19. Dhakur by Shuka Dev.
20. Kula-Panji by Ghatak-Visharad Kanti Ram.
21. Dakuri by Shyama.
22. Dakshin-Radhiya Karika by Maladhar Ghatak.
23. Karika by Ghatak-Keshari.
24. Karika by Ghatak-Churamani.
25. Kula-Panjika by Ghatak-Vachaspati.
26. Dhakuri by Sarvabhaum.
27. Dhakuri by Vachaspati.
28. Dhakuri by Shambhu Vidyanidhi.
29. Dhakuri by Kashinath Vasu.
30. Dhakuri by Madhav Ghatak.
31. Dhakuri by Nandaram Mishra.
32. Dhakuri by Radhamohan Saraswati.
33. Maulik Vamsha-Karika by Dwija Ramananda.
34. Dakshin-Radhiya Kula-Sarvasva.
35. Ekjay -Karika.
36. Vangaja-Kulaji-Sara-Samgraha.
37. Vangaja-Kulaji by Dwija Vachaspati.
38. Vangaja-Dhakuri by Dwija Ramananda.
39. Maulik-Dhakuri by Ramnarayan Vasu.
40. Dhakuri of Varendra Kayasthas by Kashi Ram Das.
41. Varendra-Dhakur by Yadu-Nandan.
42. Kulaji of Gandha-Vaniks by Tilak-Ram.
43. Do. by Parashu-Ram.
44. Kulaji of Tamvula-Vaniks by Dwija Patra Parashuram.
45. Kulaji of the Tantubains (Weavers) by Madhav.
46. Satdharmachara-Katha by Kinkar Das.
47. Sadgopa-Kulachara by Mani-Madhav.
48. Tili-Panjika by Rameshwar Datta.
49. Suvarna-Vanik-Karika by Mangal.
50. Raja-Mala (completed 1439 A.D.) by Shukreshwar and Vaneshwar. This last is a genealogical history of the Rajas of Tripura.

Important to the student of history.

These genealogical works preserve the traditions of an ancient race, and though the composition of many of them, as we have said, belongs to comparatively recent times, yet they embody facts regarding our social condition which have been transmitted from distant ages. They are, therefore, entitled to the consideration of those interested in the history of Bengal. Not only do they give accounts of our social movements, but they also are full of incidental references to contemporary events.

An example: Nula Panchanan on the question of the caste of the Sen Kings of Bengal.

I shall here refer in some detail to a genealogical account written by a Brahmin named Nula Panchanan, who is an admitted authority on the subject. The style of writing and the description of the subject clearly show that the author, who lived about 350 years ago, had embodied in it facts found in older records. The book is called *Gosthikatha-Karika*. It is chosen here for reference, because the genealogical accounts will not again be touched upon, and because the matter contained in the Karika is important, as giving the solution of a very knotty problem in the history of Bengal. The Sen Kings of Bengal were formerly believed to have belonged to the Vaidya or Medical caste. In all the genealogical works written by the Brahmans, Vaidyas and Kayasthas, they were described as Vaidyas. In fact Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra, who was the first to dispute the point of their caste, had to admit that "The universal belief in Bengal is that the Senas were of Medical caste and families of Vaidyas are not wanting in the present day who trace their lineage from Vallal Sen."* But in the copper-plate inscriptions of the Sen Kings, lately discovered in various parts of the country, they have been found to declare themselves as Brahma-Kshatriyas. In the face of their own declaration on this subject, the traditions and written accounts, which were formerly considered as perfectly reliable,

* *Indo-Aryans*, p. 265.

lost all authority, and the Sen Kings were generally accepted by scholars as having been Kshatriyas. Now the descendants of those Brahmans, Kayasthas and persons of other castes, on whom Vallal Sen had bestowed Kaulinya, knew him to have belonged to the Vaidya caste, and they were in possession of written records substantiating this point. Yet nothing was now considered more reliable than a declaration on the part of the princes themselves as to the caste to which they belonged, preserved in the lasting impression borne by the copper-plates. The Karika, to which we have referred, however, unravels the history of these aspirations and proves them to have been mere pretensions. We quote a part of this interesting record below* :—

"One day the King asked the Brahmans of five Gotras (families), some of whom were great Kulins, and other Shuddha

* "একদিন রাজা জিজ্ঞাসিল পঞ্চ গোত্রীয়ে।
মহাবংশ কুলীন আর সিদ্ধ শ্রোত্রিয়ে॥
বহু সভাসদ আছ যতেক পণ্ডিত।
কি হেতু ত্যজিলে বৈদ্যে ছিলে পুরোহিত॥
উত্তরিল মহেশাদি যতেক সুকৃতী।
নিত্য যাজে রত নহি নৈমিত্তিকে ব্রতী॥
অন্ন হল দশকর্ম্মী শ্রাদ্ধে পিণ্ডভোজী।
দ্বিজের স্থণিলে ঋত্বিক নহি শূদ্রযাজী॥
আদিশূর রাজা বৈদ্য বৈদ্য তার জাতি।
একছত্রী রাজা ছিল ক্ষত্রবৎ ভাতি॥
ইন্দ্রদ্যুম্ন বৌদ্ধ রাজা জগন্নাথে কীর্ত্তি।
সাম্যবাদী তবু বলায় ক্ষত্রিয়বৃত্তি॥
রাজা হলে রাজত্ব সে না ভাবে অন্যথা।
পতিত কাম্বোজাদি গৌড়ে ক্ষত্র যথা॥
ভূপাল অনঙ্গপাল আর মহীপাল।
জাতি ভ্রষ্ট ক্ষত্র নহে রাজত্ব প্রবল॥
তারাও বিভা করিত তিন জাতির মেয়ে।
ব্রাহ্মণ পুরোধা সাতশতী দেখ চেয়ে॥
তাই তারা ক্রিয়াকাণ্ডে বেদ জ্ঞানহীন।
যাজক পিণ্ডভোজী প্রথা ত অপ্রাচীন॥

Shrotriyas, 'O Pandits who adorn my court, tell me why have you deserted the Vaidyas, whereas formerly you used to discharge priestly functions in their families?' Mahesh and other learned men said in reply, 'We are not prepared to do the daily work of priests in any house. We perform priestly offices for occasional ceremonies only. The Brahmans who discharge ten set functions in one house, and eat the rice offered to the dead in the Shraddha-ceremony, are generally illiterate. We act as priests in the *Homa*-ceremonies of the Brahmans only, and do not act as priests in the houses of Shudras. King Adishur was a Vaidya. He belonged to the Vaishya caste. He was an emperor paramount, and therefore assumed the status of a Kshatriya. Indradyumna was a Buddhist King. He founded the Jagannath Temple. He did not believe in castes, yet he called himself a Kshatriya. Whoever becomes a King, aspires to the status of a Kshatriya without considering other points. Similar instances are to be found in the cases of out-castes like the Kambojes in Gaud. Bhupal, Ananga-pal and Mahipal were not Kshatriyas, they were out-castes.

বল্লাল লয় যবে পদ্মিনী জাতি হীনা।
লক্ষ্মণ কহে দ্বিজে এ প্রথা ত দেখিনা॥
তাই বল্লাল ত্যজে কুপুত্র বলি সুতে।
লক্ষ্মণ ত্যজে পৈতা বৈদ্যকুল রক্ষিতে॥
ইথে উভয় পক্ষের বৈদ্য পতিত ব্রাত্য।
ক্রমশঃ বুঝলে গণ্য অত্রত্য তত্রত্য॥
* * * *
ভূমিপ হইলে সবার ইচ্ছা হয় ক্ষত্র।
গৌরব হেতু 'রাজন্য' বলায় যত্র তত্র॥
সবারি অভিলাষ সে উচ্চ হয় নিজে।
দেবত্ব পেলেও ইচ্ছা ব্রহ্মত্বে বিরাজে॥
* * * *
বৈদ্য রাজা আদিশূর ক্ষত্রিয় আচার।
বেদে ব্রহ্মবৎ কার্য্যে মাত্র ব্যবহার॥"

Sambandha-Nirnay by Lalmohan Vidyanidhi (2nd Edition) pp. 584-89.

But they were great Kings, hence they could marry girls from the three highest classes. Look at the Sat-Shati priests, they discharge priestly functions in all houses, hence they have lost all knowledge of the Vedas. They eat the rice offered to the dead in the Shraddha ceremony. When Vallal Sen tried to pass into society a low-caste woman named Padmini, his son Lakshman Sen informed the Brahmans of his action and cried it down. Vallal in great rage dismissed Lakshman Sen from his court, and Lakshman, in order to protect the Vaidyas from his father's ire, made them give up the sacred thread. Thus the Vaidyas who belonged to the party of Vallal Sen, and those that belonged to that of his son, became Vratyas (fallen).

"Raja Adishur belonged to the Vaidya caste, but he adopted the ways of a Kshatriya. Whoever becomes a king, wants to be called a Kshatriya, and, for his own glorification, declares himself as a Kshatriya everywhere. Every one aspires to a higher position than what he enjoys. The Devas * want the position of Brahma the Great God. According to the Shastras, Adishur was a Brahman (since the Vaidyas are traceable to an original Brahman father), but by custom he was a Vaishya."

The last lines account for the Sen Kings calling themselves Brahma-Kshatriyas in the copper-plate inscriptions.

An indefatigable worker in the field.

These genealogical works give us, then, in terse and epigrammatic prose and poetry, the salient points in the social history of Bengal for the last one thousand years. The Bengali scholar whose indefatigable labour has brought to light hundreds of MSS. of genealogical works in Sanskrit and Bengali, and who has drawn the attention of his fellow-countrymen to an altogether unexplored field of literature, is Nagendranath Vasu, the learned editor of the Bengali Encyclopædia *Vishvakosh*.

* Minor gods or angels.

Supplementary Notes

TO

CHAPTER II

Bengali—a form of Prakrit.

The Bengali language was known to our early writers as the form of Prakrit. The name Vanga-Bhasa is of recent origin. They called it Prakrita,* or merely Bhasha.

* The old Bengali writers usually designated our language as **Prakrit**. There are numerous instances of it in our old literature. A few are quoted below:—

" ভারতের পুণ্যকথা শ্রদ্ধা বহু নহে।
পয়ারে প্রবন্ধে রাজেন্দ্র দাস কহে॥ "

Adi-Parva, by Rajendra Das.

" তাহা অনুসারে লিখি প্রাকৃত কথনে। "

Krishna-Karnamrita.

" প্রাকৃত লিখিয়া বুঝি এই মোর সাধ। "

Govinda-Lilamrita,
translated by Jadunandan Das.

" ইহা বলি গীতার পড়িল এক শ্লোক।
প্রাকৃত প্রবন্ধে কহি শুন সর্ব্ব লোক॥ "

Chaitanya-Mangal,
by Lochan Das.

" সপ্তদশ পর্ব্ব কথা সংস্কৃত ছন্দ।
মূর্খ বুঝিবারে কৈল পয়ারে প্রবন্ধ॥ "

Ashwamedh-Parva,
by Ram Chandra Khan.

In an old Bengali translation of **Gita-Govinda**, we come across the following lines in Sanskrit by way of conclusion of a chapter. This has been quoted previously:—

" ইতি শ্রীশ্রীগীতগোবিন্দে মহাকাব্যে প্রাকৃতভাষায়াং স্বাধীনভর্তৃকাবর্ণনে সুপ্রীতপীতাম্বর-নাম দ্বাদশসর্গঃ। "

The tendency to Sanskritize Bengali.

It has already been said in a foregoing chapter that our language, under Buddhistic influence, had lapsed into a very lax form of Prakrita, and was on that account treated with contempt by the Brahmanic school. I have already referred to some of its chief sources of development after the downfall of Buddhism. Within the last one thousand years there has been a movement for the enrichment of our language by importing Sanskrit words, and by correcting the current forms of words according to the rules laid down in Sanskrit grammar. Curiously enough, in this process of the resuscitation of words, our language offers a striking resemblance to the Romance languages which also passed through a similar process almost at the same period of history. If we look into the works noticed in the foregoing pages, this fact will be apparent. In spite of many portions of these works having been recast in subsequent times, there are numerous instances in them of words belonging to a very lax form of Prakrita, which are no longer in written use. I quote some such words below :—

কাত্তি—the month of Kartika (last half of October and first half of November), পখা—wings, নখতা—stars, পুনি—again, বগা—crane, দে—body, বিনি—without, আহ্মি—I, তুহ্মি—you, মুরুখ—a dunce, বিভা—marriage, পুষ্প—a flower, বজ্জ—thunder, দয়ন—a mirror.

The resuscitation of words.

The influence of the written forms of words in a literary language is often reflected in its spoken forms, and if we study the Prakrita writings of the 5th and 6th centuries, we shall find numerous instances of লাম, দলিদ্দ, চালুদত্ত, চলন and similar words being used for রাম, দরিদ্র, চারুদত্ত, চরণ, etc. These loose forms are no longer in use in any spoken dialect of India within the knowledge of the writer of the present treatise. In the translation of the Ramayana by Krittivasa (born, 1432 A.D.) there is one curious passage, which he certainly did not find in the original poem of Valmiki, referring to this process of the recovery of words from their lax Prakrita forms. Valmiki, when he was a robber, could

not say রাম but pronounced the word as লাম. The sage Narada attributed this inability to the vices that he had practised in life, and declared with much force that no vicious man would ever be able to pronounce র. This story may be understood as an instance of the way in which the later Brahmanical school attacked and overcame the loose forms of Prakrita current in the Buddhistic period. No Bengali peasant, however illiterate, would now be excused if he could not pronounce the র in রাম.

The correction of words in the written forms of our language has continued even up to the present day. Every year the correctness of a number of current words is called in question, being measured by the severe test of Sanskrit grammar. If any flaw is found in the writings of modern Bengali authors, judging by this standard of the Sanskrit grammar, he is unsparingly abused by the purists, and the Bengali language is gradually growing ornate and classical. In this respect it approaches Sanskrit as does no other language of modern India. Bengali was formerly, however, extremely colloquial,* and the reactionary spirit has, perhaps for this very reason, taken an extreme form. Within the last ten years ইতিমধ্যে, সক্ষম, অজ্ঞানিত, নিমগ্ন, নিরপরাধী, কলঙ্কিনী, গোপিনী, পথমধ্যে, পথভ্রান্ত, স্বজন, and similar words which were in every day use, have lost their status in the written language, because they have not been found to conform to the rules of Sanskrit.

Bengali now a highly artificial language.

Now Bengali is a highly artificial language. I quote here a Bengali hymn by Bharata Chandra,—the great Bengali poet of the 18th century. One may take this as a piece of pure Sanskrit, and if written in Devnagari characters it will be read by Sanskrit scholars

* That formerly the language of Bengal was the furthest removed amongst Indian languages from the standards of Sanskrit will be proved inspite of its present very highly Sanskritised form, by the fact that even now ণ, ষ & ঋ are not rightly pronounced by us and for this defect the Sanskrit schools of Benares, Bombay and other important centres of Sanskrit learning treat us with contempt.

all over the world as a Sanskrit poem. They will certainly be surprised to hear that it is a Bengali poem, quoted from the Bengali work Annada Mangala. This goes to show to what an extent written Bengali has approached Sanskrit.

"জয় শিবেশ শঙ্কর, বৃষধ্বজেশ্বর, মৃগাঙ্কশেখর, দিগম্বর।
জয় শ্মশাননাটক, বিষাণবাদক, হুতাশভালক মহত্তর॥
জয় সুরারিনাশন, বৃষেশবাহন, ভুজঙ্গভূষণ জটাধর।
জয় ত্রিলোককারক, ত্রিলোকপালক, ত্রিলোকনাশক মহেশ্বর॥"

One word more ought to be said here regarding this process of the resuscitation of words. Several European scholars have found fault with Bengali authors for writing in a high flown artificial style, and for their tendency to use Sanskritic words in Bengali, in place of the corresponding current forms which are intelligible to the masses.

The causes analysed.

We must, however, proceed to enquire why such a style is daily growing in favour with Bengali writers, if it is so artificial. No one has power to dictate arbitrary rules for the growth of a language. This will always develop naturally inspite of opposing influences. Only so long as our efforts help the natural course, will the rules laid down by grammarians and purists be accepted by the people. Arbitrary forms may be excused, if used by a genius ; they can never, however, claim a place in common language. Language steadily changes according to its inherent requirements. It will not follow any capricious course which may be dictated by individuals. This principle applies to the written and spoken forms of a language equally.

If this view of the matter is correct, we ought to see what influences tended to develop our language after the model of Sanskrit, and how long those influences are likely to work in the future.

The propaganda of the Pauranic religion familiarised Sanskrit texts.

Though Buddhism, as we have said, gave Bengali its first impetus towards the attainment of a literary status, the Sanskritic School afterwards took it up in right earnest and set themselves to the task of embellishing it. Let us take a survey of Hindu society in its entirety, after the downfall of Buddhism. The attempts of the revivalists to introduce the spirit of Pauranik religion amongst the masses were directed in various channels. There were the Yatras, or popular theatres ; Kathakatas or narratives and recitations to which we shall have to refer hereafter ; the *Pathas*, or readings from Sanskrit texts ; the Kirtanas, singing by the Vaisnavas ; and other similar organised efforts to popularise the creed of the Pauranic religion all over Bengal. The influence of these institutions upon the popular mind was immense. No village in Bengal, however humble it might be, was without them. Not only did they form a perennial source of amusement to the people, but they formed the mission and the propaganda of Pauranic religion. The whole atmosphere of Bengal was permeated by these influences ; and as Sanskrit texts formed their main basis, a greater number of Sanskrit words was every day imported into Bengali and a closer contact with Sanskritic forms made the ear constantly keener in the perception of faulty expression. Thus the process of self-correction held an uninterrupted course.

The views of foreign scholars open to objection.

The view generally taken by foreign scholars, that this process of Sanskritising made the literary language incomprehensible to the masses, is not tenable. When a village yatra, or popular theatrical performance, is going on, ploughmen, shop-keepers and other illiterate people will stand patiently for hours, witnessing the scenes. And what do they hear? নীরদবরন, নবঘনশ্যাম, নিকুঞ্জকানন, মরাল-গামিনী, গজপতি-গতি, অকলঙ্ক-বিধু, পীতবাস, কমল-নয়ন, বিধুবদন, নীলোৎপল, মত্ত করিবর, মৃগ-পতি, হরিনাক্ষ, মনসিজ, মৃগানেত্র, and hundreds of such words which are never used in their current dialect come pouring in upon their ears, and these they enjoy

immensely. The Ramayana of Krittivasa, and the Mahabharata of Kasidasa are read by peasants, and artizans, and in these works learned expressions like "নিষ্কলঙ্ক বিধুমুখী পীনঘনস্তনী" are so numerous that one would wonder how the illiterate men and women who hear them recited, could appreciate them. Yet there is not the least shadow of doubt that they do so. For in Bengal 100,000 copies of the Ramayana published from Battala are sold every year, and it is doubtful if a hundredth part of these copies is sold to the *Bhadralokas* or gentlefolk. Our masses are not at all in awe of the Sanskrit vocabulary. On the other hand they seem to be in love with it. They are fond of pedantic words and when they commit mistakes in using such words in their conversation, our scholarly people smile in derision. Our Calcutta theatres have many farcical scenes in which the rural folk, attempting a high flown style, are held up to ridicule for the inappropriate use of words. Thus the artificial style of the present day originates in a variety of causes attending the revival of Hinduism, and so long as the rich vocabulary of Sanskrit is not fully exhausted, this process of the recovery of words and the importation of choice expressions from it for literary and technical purposes, is not likely to cease. No one would leave a precious store until it has given him all that he needs. The genius of our language moves towards the Sanskrit ideal, being attracted to it by its unparallelled wealth of expression, and until it has taken full advantage of this treasure, it is not likely to change its present course. Our learned men desire this and our rural folk desire it no less. Broad-based as is the movement of our language towards the classical model, on the natural requirements of the Pauranic renaissance, we cannot forcibly retard this stream.

The people not in awe of the Sanskrit vocabulary.

Our masses, as I have said, are not afraid of encountering Sanskrit words. The very nature of their environment has accustomed them to this. If the modern literature of Bengal affords them any difficulty, it is

Anglicised Bengali troubles them.

found in those modes of expression and of constructing sentences in which Bengali follows the model of English that appears strange and unintelligible to them.

The Bengali works, to which I have referred in this chapter, mainly form what may be called a rustic literature. They were in many cases recast and revised in subsequent times, but as I have already said there are many evidences indicative of the early period to which their composition is to be referred. There are quaint terms and expressions which have not only grown obsolete but are in many cases unintelligible to us. The literature of the period shows that our language was as remote from classical Sanskrit in those days, as it is akin to it now. I quote several passages here from the works mentioned in this chapter which will illustrate these facts.

Though recast, the works often retain earlier forms.

Examples.

"শুখান কাঠে বটে কাউ।
ভাস্তি দাপুনি দেখে লাউ॥
যোগী আছ ছু ছু কলসী।
তা দেখিলে ঘর না আসি॥
যে লাগে শেষি লাগে।
যে না লাগে শেষি লাগে॥
সাতে হাতে তিন বিগথে।
তাহার কান্দি ধরে মাথে॥
আউট হাত আউট মুঠি।
তাহার ধান্ত না লড়ে ঢেকী॥"

Dak

"সুনার কাস্তাখানি গঠিআ জুগাল।
সাত নারিকল জলে দাখানি পানিতলে॥
মরা মিন পুনরাম্র পরাণ দান পাইল।
নামসপ্ত মারিল মিগর গাএ।
বনর মিগ তখন বনেত পালএ॥
সবগর ভীম খেত্তীক জে হুঙ্কার পড়িল।
আসিআত ভীম খেত্তী পরণাম করিল॥"

Shunya Purana

"চিয়াও চিয়াও বুড়িমা কল যাত্রা নিনি।
কত নিদ্রা কর মা আবালের গোপিনী॥"

Songs of Gopichandra

"বাওন্ন মনি কাঁথা নিল কোমরে বান্দিয়া।
আশি মনি সোডা নিলে কপালে ডাবিয়া॥
নয় মনিয়া খড়ম নিল চরনে নাগায়া।
মন পঞ্চাশে ভাঙ্গের গুড়া মুখের মধ্যে দিয়া।
কলসি দশেক জল দিয়া ফালাইল গিলিয়া।
আর গৈড় মার গৈড় তিনটা গৈড় দিয়া॥
পুঠি চৌদ্দ ধুলা নিলে হিরদে মাখিয়া।
ওঠে এলা হাড়িসিদ্ধা গাও মোড়া দিয়া॥
সগগেতে ঠেকিল মাথা হুটুস্ করিয়া।
চান সুজ্জা থুইলে সিদ্ধা দুই কাণে ভরিয়া॥"

Songs of Gopichandra

A list of obsolete words with meaning.

Here follows a list of words, found in the books mentioned in this chapter, which have become obsolete, with their meaning. A still more complete list of such words will be found in my Bengali work—"Vanga Bhasa-O-Sahitya."

অক	...	To him.
অগর	...	Aloe wood (Aquilaria agallocha).
অচুম্বিতের	...	Of wonder, all on a sudden.
অচ্ছরের	...	Of a scholar.
অফিন্	...	Not rooted out.
অস্‌স	...	Hore.
অইন্যেক	...	Many.
আইদ	...	Beginning.
আউড়ে	...	In a crooked way.
আও	...	Sound.
আধার	...	Food.
আনাম	...	Air.
আপহর	...	Guard, watch.
আপ্ত	...	One's own.

আরিব্বল ... The span of one's life.
আসানড়ি ... A stick.
আসিন্যা ... Bath.
ইখু ... A sugarcane.
ঈসর ... God.
একেতন যেকতন ... Somehow or other.
এলায় ... Now.
উকুল ... Without bank, sea.
উলী ... Good fortune.
কন্নি ... A writer.
কাঞ্জী ... Small.
কুশলানী ... A well-wisher.
কেওদা ... Fat.
খচরা ... Those that move in the air.
গতি ... Followers.
গাভুর ... Strong, youthful.
গাবুরাণী ... Youthfulness.
গিরি ... House.
গাএন ... The chief singer in a chorus.
গোঁধলা ... Cow-dung.
ছামুর ... Of the front.
ছুছু ... Empty.
জীউ ... Long live.
জ্ঞাস্তা ... Agnates.
ঝোলাঙ্গা ... A wallet.
ডকবুস ... A big cudgel.
ডহর ... Low marshy lands.
ডারুকা ... A sort of chain.
ডারিয়া ... By binding.
ডাম্বাডোল ... A great tumult and uproar.
ডেবাডোরা ... To proclaim by beat of drum.
তাঁউল ... Rice.
তেতকে ... So much.
দায় ... Character, name.
দামরা ... Drum.

দোন ... Two.
দিব্ব ... A thing.
দুআরপাল, দুআরী ... Gate-keeper.
দুহি ... Two.
ধওল ... White.
ধিরকালি ... A musical instrument.
ধেআনে ... In contemplation.
নঅদিব ... Navadwip.
নঠ ... Spoiled.
নিন্দ ... Sleep.
নিতে ... Without.
নিত ... Dance.
নিল্লঅ ... To ascertain.
নেয়াই ... Right.
পটা ... Plank.
পইতায় ... To believe.
পোখরি ... Pond.
পাহাড় ... Bank.
পয়দল ... Foot soldiers.
বারুণ ... A broom.
বুন্দা ... A drizzle.
বম্ভ ... Brahma.
বাঅতি ... One who plays on a musical instrument.
বাজ্জ ... A musical instrument.
বেআলি ... Difference.
ভুসঙ্গ ... Ashes.
মাও ... Mother.
মধুকর ... A big boat.
মাল্লি ... Food.
মাড়াল ... Path.
মিঠ ... Sweet.
মুজ্জ'ল ... A musical instrument.
মেটে ... To the place.

লহড়	...	A run.
সয়ল	...	All.
সমাধে	...	To understand.
সানে	...	To sign.
সাঁও	...	A snake.
সেঁওয়ালী	...	Pertaining to evening.
হীন	...	Without.

Bengali verbs.

Bengali verbs are easily traced to those of Prakrita. From হোই, পড়ই, কিনই, করই, বোলই, গচ্ছই, ফুট, গাঅ, খাঅ, বুজঝ, চিন, জান, লগ্গ, পুচ্ছ, etc, the transformation is easily made to হয়, পড়ে, কেনা, করে, বলে, নাচে, ফোটা, গাওয়া, থাকা, বুঝা, চেনা, জানা, লাগা, পোঁছা, etc.

The participle forms in Prakrita শুনিঅ, লভিঅ, লই, করিঅ pass through slight changes in Bengali-Prakrita অচ্ছি changed to আছি and আছে, joins itself to other verbs, and forms the origin of the present participle in Bengali. Such forms as করিয়া + আছে, করিয়াছে, করেছে and কচ্ছে are thus accounted for. The Sanskrit form আসীৎ, changed to the Bengali আছিল forms in the same manner the suffix of Bengali verbs in the past tense, such as করিয়া + আছিল, করিয়াছিল, and দেখিয়া + আছিল, দেখিয়াছিল, etc. In the backward villages of Bengal the two words are still often used separately in the present participle forms, such as করিতে-আছে, খাইতে-আছে। There are numerous instances of Prakrita and Sanskrit forms of verbs being used in the works which we have dealt with in this chapter. Such for instance as করোসি, যায়ন্তি, বলন্তি, etc. We quote some examples below :—

1. ইষ্ট দেবতা যেহ পূজসি। Dak.
2. পরণাম করিয়া হংস বলন্তি সেইকালে।

Shunya Purana

These forms are now quite obsolete in Bengali.*

The Sanskrit forms করোমি and কুর্বঃ have both been adopted in Bengali, subject to certain changes. In Eastern Bengal করুম (a form of করোমি) is in the colloquial use. Western Bengal favoured the from করিব=করব (form কুর্বঃ); and many instances of both are found in old literature. We quote a few lines below to show the use of করিবু (a form of কুর্বঃ). The various forms derived from করোমি are very frequently met with in old Bengali literature.

1. "নিতি নিতি অপরাধ করে। বলে ডাক কি করিবু তারে।"
Dak

2. "পৈরাগ মাধব নহি কি করিবু বিচার।"
Sunya Purana

করিবু is changed to করিব and this form has been adopted in written Bengali both in Eastern and Western Bengal. The appearance of ক in হউক, যাউক, খাউক, etc., is difficult to account for. Dr. Grierson traces it to Sanskrit কিম্. In old Bengali, there are frequent uses of verbs without this familiar suffix, as in,—

1. "জীউ জীউ রায়ত ধর্ম্ম দিউক বর।"
Manik Chandra Rajar Gan

2. "জয় হউ তোর যত ভকত সমাজ।"
Chaitanya Bhagavat

* In later works written in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries instances of such use were numerous,—as in

1. "ভিক্ষুকের কথা তুমি কহিস আমারে।"
Mahabharata by Sanjaya.

2. "নির্ভয়ে বোলেহ তবে সংগ্রাম ভিতর।"
Bhisma Parva by Kavindra.

3. "বড় বড় বৈষ্ণব তার দর্শনেতে যান্তি।"
Chaitanya Charitamrita.

4. "হিরণ্যকশিপু মারি পিবন্তি রুধির।"
Sri-Krishna-Vijaya.

The verbal termination ই in the old imperative forms করিহ, যাইহ (changed to করিও, যাইও) is traced to Sanskrit হি; and examples of হি changed to হ are numerous in Prakrita. The হি often changes to হুঁ in Prakrita, as in মইন্দ করেহুঁ in Pingal. This হুঁ forms a suffix of verbs in Hindi.

Softening of words.

In Bengali and in Prakrita, words are generally softened,

(*i*) by changing the double letter to a single one. The long vowel আ in such cases is introduced to coalesce with the preceding letter, as হস্তি=হাতি, হস্ত=হাত, সপ্ত=সাত, কক্ষ=কাখ, মল্ল=মাল, বজ্র=বাজ, হট্ট=হাট, অষ্ট=আট, কর্ণ=কাণ, কজ্জল=কাজল, অক্ষি=আঁখি, ভল্লুক=ভালুক,—sometimes the long vowel আ also joins with the last letter, as ছত্র=ছাতা, চক্র=চাকা, চন্দ্র=চাঁদা, পক্ক=পাকা, পত্র=পাতা। There are also instances of the vowel আ of the termination being dropped as লজ্জা=লাজ, সজ্জনা=সাজ, ঢক্কা=ঢাক ;

(*ii*) by elision of a letter, as

(ক elided), সুবর্ণকার=সোণার, চর্ম্মকার=চামার, কর্ম্মকার=কামার, কুম্ভকার=কুমার, নৌকা=নাও or না।

(খ elided), মুখ=মু।

(গ ,,), ত্রিগুণ=তুনো, ভগিনী=বহিন=বোন।

(ত ,,), ভ্রাতা=ভাই, মাতা=মা, শত=শ।

(দ ,,), হৃদয়=হিয়া, কদলী=কলা।

(ভ ,,), নাভি=নাই, গাভী=গাই।

(ম ,,), গ্রাম=গাঁ।

ট and ড of Sanskrit words often change to ড় in their corresponding Bengali forms, and ধ to জ or ঝ ; as ঘোটক=ঘোড়া, ঘট=ঘড়া, চণ্ডাল=চাঁড়াল, ষণ্ড=ষাঁড়, ভাণ্ড=ভাঁড়, উপাধ্যায়=ওঝা, সন্ধ্যা=সাঁজ, মধ্য=মাঝ।

Bengali case-affixes.

The case-affix in Bengali of the nominative (first person, singular) is generally formed by omitting the aspirate or the nasal ং of Sanskrit. The affix এন of the Sanskrit instrumental nominative, is reduced to এ in

Prakrita and used in active forms; as "শুজণেণ্ড ভিচ্চাণুকম্পকে শামিএ ণিজ্জণকে বি শোহদে" (Mrichchhakatika, Act III). Instances of this এ forming the affix of nominatives in active forms are numerous in old Bengali Mss., as :—

The nominative case.

1. "শুনিয়া রাজাএ বোলে হইয়া কৌতুক।"

Sanjay

2. "কোনমতে বিধাতাএ করিছে নির্ম্মাণ।"

Rameswar's Mahabharata.

In the current dialect of Bengal this এ is often used as রাজাএ ডাকিয়াছে, বাঘে ধরিয়াছে, etc. It is to be noted that the Bengali sentences, in active forms owe their construction rather to Sanskrit passive forms. The difference in the dual and plural numbers is not preserved in Prakrita. The usual affix in the plural forms being 'আ', কুশলবা for কুশলবৌ, পুত্তআ for পুত্রাঃ and like forms are frequently found in Prakrita. In old Bengali also আ forms the affix of the nominative plural; as in :—

"নরা গজা বিশে শয়।
তার অর্দ্ধ বাঁচে হয়॥
বাইশ বলদা তের ছাগলা।
তার অর্দ্ধ বরা পাগলা॥"

Khana

Trump traces the কে of the Bengali accusative to the Sanskrit কৃতে, used in the locative. But Max Müller's view, tracing কে to the Sanskrit pleonastic ক, is evidently correct. In the Gatha and Prakrita languages the instances of the affix ক used pleonastically are so numerous, that sometimes we find it occurring in many words in a sentence—as in the Lalita-Vistara :—

The Bengali accusative.

সুবসন্তকে ঋতুবরে আগতকে।
রমিমো প্রিয়া ফুল্লিতপাদপকে॥

তব রূপ সুরূপ সুশোভনকো।
বশবর্ত্তি সুলক্ষণে-বিচিত্রিতকো॥
বয়ং জাত সুজাত সুসংস্থিতিকাঃ।
সুখকারণ দেবনরাণ বসন্ততিকাঃ॥
উথি লঘু পরিভুঞ্জ সুযৌবনকং।
দুর্লভ বোধি নিবর্ত্তয় মানসকম্॥

(Chap. XXI)

Where the affix ক forms the termination of words in both nominative and accusative forms, it often becomes difficult to distinguish between the two. In sentences,—like,

"সৌরীন্ধ্রক কীচক বলএ তত্তক্ষণ।"

Kavindra

a doubt may naturally occur as to who the person addressed is. It is, therefore, probable that for avoiding this difficulty, the form কে was adopted to denote the accusative and dative cases. In the Gatha and Prakrita languages instances of the affix কে in the accusative and dative cases are not wanting, as in—

পলিত্তাঅত্থ আদু দাশীএ পুত্তে দলিদ্দ চালুদত্তাকে তুমং।"

Mrichchhakatika, 8th Act

The pleonastic ক formerly served as the mere termination of a word and was not reckoned as a case-affix. Hence in old Bengali this কে is often affixed to words in various cases; as in "মথুরাকে পাঠাইল রূপ সনাতন" (Chaitanya Charitamrita) and "কাঁধকে রুমাল করি হাসয়ে মুরারি" (Sri-Krishna-Vijaya), where it forms the termination of the words in the locative case.

The plural number.

In old Bengali writings, সব, সকল, গুটি and similar words were generally used to denote the plural number. The word "আদি" (beginning with) was also often used with a noun to imply plurality. The following extract from Narottama-Vilasa will show numerous instances of the use of আদি in the above manner.

শ্রীচৈতন্যদাস আদি যথা উত্তরিলা।
শ্রীনৃসিংহ কবিরাজে তথা নিয়োজিলা॥
শ্রীপতি শ্রীনিধি পণ্ডিতাদি বাসা ঘরে।
করিলেন নিযুক্ত শ্রীবাস আচার্য্যেরে।
আকাই হাটের কৃষ্ণদাসাদি বাসায়।
হইলা নিযুক্ত শ্রীবল্লভী কান্থ রায়।

The genitive forms.

The genitive sign র being affixed to পণ্ডিতাদি, কবিরাজাদি forms পণ্ডিতাদির, কবিরাজাদির, and the current genitive forms পণ্ডিতদের, কবিরাজদের are thus easily explained. The pleonastic affix ক is often found to be joined with পণ্ডিতাদি, কবিরাজাদি, etc. In the Narottama-Vilasa we find

"রামচন্দ্রাদিক যৈছ গেলা বৃন্দাবনে।
কবিরাজ খ্যাতি তার হইল যেমনে॥"

This দিক্ is changed to দিগ and we may thus account for দিগর and দিগের—formed by joining the genitive affix র to the above words. Some Bengali scholars are, however, of opinion that the genitive plural "দিগের" comes directly from the Persian 'দিগর'.

The current Bengali form in Eastern Bengal in the genitive plural is, however, formed not by affixing 'দিগের' but by 'গো' or 'গোর' to the words. The forms আমাগোর, তোমাগোর, তানগোর, রামগোর, are no doubt derived by the genitive post-position র being affixed to the pleonastic 'ক', changed to গ.

The instrumental case.

There can scarcely be said to be any particular affix in Bengali to denote the instrumental case. The Sanskrit রামেণ changes to রামএ. I have said that the Bengali active forms were akin to the Sanskrit passive voice. The sentences 'কুড়ালে পা কাটিয়াছে,' 'রাজায় বলিয়াছে,' still in current use in different parts of Bengal, show how the construction of the Sanskrit passive changes into Bengali active forms.

The dative case.

There is no difference in Bengali between the dative and the accusative case, the affix কে being used for both.

Ablative case.

The Prakrita sign for the ablative case is হিংতো. The Bengali হইতে is derived from হিংতো. In old Bengali we find this word to be হন্তে, as in,—"হাড় হন্তে নির্ম্মিয়া করয় পুনি হাড়" (Padmavati by Aloal), and often as হনে, as in,—"সেই হনে প্রাণ মোর আছে বা না জানি।" (Sanjay).

The genitive case.

The genitive post-position ণ of Prakrita changes to র in Bengali. In the place of Prakrita অগ্গীণ we have Bengali অগ্নির; ণ often changes to 'ড়' or 'র' and examples of this are numerous in the Uriya dialect. Bopp, however, considers the genitive affix র to have been derived from the Sanskrit affix ক in the genitive plural forms as অস্মাকম্, যুষ্মাকম্, etc. Dr. Hœrnle traces this র to Sanskrit কৃত, changed into কেরক, কের, কর and other forms in the Prakrita and Hindi dialects. Raja Rajendra Lal is of opinion that the Bengali র comes from the Sanskrit genitive affix স্য.

The locative case.

The locative ে in Bengali is probably to be traced to the Sanskrit ঙসিল. The locative in Bengali is often the same as in Sanskrit, as গহনে, কাননে, গৃহে, etc. Sanskrit শালায়াং, বেলায়াং, ভূম্যাং, etc. changes to শালাএ, বেলাএ, ভূমিএ, &c. and in old Bengali such forms were in general use. In modern Bengali the এ changes to য়।

Assamese, Uriya and Bengali.

Let us say a word regarding Assamese and Uriya in relation to Bengali, the three now forming distinct languages. Before the first Bengali grammar was written by Halhead, Bengali—which was called "Gaudiya Sadhu Bhasa" by the people—presented different provincial dialects even in literary compositions. The same author's works were read all over a vast tract of country, which geographically transcended the limits of Modern Bengal and the Eastern Provinces. But words were changed by those who copied the manuscripts, conformably to the dialectical peculiarities of each district, so that one reads 'লাক' in the old manuscripts of Krittivasa, found in Western Bengal, where কাল would be the usual form in a manuscript of the same work, recovered from the Eastern Provinces. The Vaisnava works

written in Bengali found readers in Orissa and Assam. The people of those countries occasionally changed words in those works to suit the peculiar forms of their dialects. Many Bengali works have lately been found in manuscript forms of Orissa. Bengali, therefore, in the various forms characteristic of provincial dialects, presented a literature which used to be read and written by the people of a vast area bounded by the sea on the South,—extending to the Himalayan forests on the North of Old Gauda,—stretching so far as Magadha and Mithila in the West and reaching to the backwoods of Assam and the outskirts of Burma on the East. The differences of dialect described, could have been easily synthesized by a common grammar, including Assamese, Uriya and Bengali in one group. Bengali, recognised as the most advanced language in Eastern India, and fast assimilating the forms of different provincial dialects, for the purpose of propagating the Vaisnava creed, might have been taken as the common vehicle for the expression of the thought of these three provinces; and in fact on the principle of natural selection, it had already, before the beginning of the nineteenth century, advanced its claim towards that end. But Assamese and Uriya have now alienated themselves from Bengali. The people of those provinces declare that they possess a distinct literature of their own which is as old as Bengali literature; and indeed they do. The people of Chittagong, Tippera and Sylhet also possess old literatures stamped with provincialism of dialect, which now form a valuable part of our literature, but which are by no means any way nearer, in style and form, to the old literature of the Burdwan and Bankura districts, than are Assamese and Uriya. The vanity of preserving the peculiarities of a small province may be natural amongst its own people, but it does not indicate a healthy state of feeling. The literary language of England has now reached a wonderful development because the American, the Irish, the Scotch and the Australian have all adopted it. There is no want of peculiarities and dialectical differences in the forms of this language as spoken in these countries; but these

differences of the spoken language are not recognised in writing, and all these countries have submitted to a single grammar. The language has thus gathered strength from the co-operation of its votaries who recognise this unity in their literature, though politically many of them are not under the same yoke. Here is a passage which I quote as a specimen of the spoken dialect of Chittagong. No Bengali of the Western districts would understand a line of it and in the peculiar form which it exhibits, it would appear more remote from current Bengali than is Uriya or Assamese.

From an advertisement on a patent medicine.

বলী খেলার কথা

রহিম ও করিম

রহিম। [করিমকে দেখিয়া] ছালাম মাউঁ, কঁড়ে যাওর ?

করিম। একানা বলীখেলা চাইতাম্ যাইর। তুঁয়ি কঁড়ে যাওর ?

রহিম। আঁয়ি বক্সীর হাডর হৃদয় ডাক্তারের দোয়ানৎ পোয়ার লাঈ কিরমাইর দাবাই আইন্‌তাম্ যাইর।

করিম। ইবা কেঁয়ন দাবাই ? বড় নাম শুনির ; পরখ্ করি ন চাই।

রহিম। ওম্-মারে-মা ! ইবা দাবাই না। ইবা বড় গম দাবাই। আঁর খালৃত ভাইর পোয়ার লাঈ এক আনা দি এক পুর্গা নিঃ খাবাইলাম যে, আজ্ঞের আন্দাজ চীর বাইর হঈল্। বাজার্গা বৌৎ দাবাই নি খাবাই চাই কোন ফল ন হয়। ইবা খাবাই বড় বেশী ফল পাঈ। আর এক কথা জাননি ? ইবার লেগে দোছরা জোলাপ ন লাগে। আর গুরা পোয়ারে খাবাইতে কন ডর নাই।

করিম। দাবাইর কি নাম কইলা যে ?

রহিম। ইবার নাম "ক্রিমি-বিজয়া।" দাম এক পুর্গা এক আনা।

করিম। দাবাই খানার কি নাম কইলা যে ?

রহিম। কোহিনুর মেডিকেল হল,—বক্সীর হাডর্ হৃদয় ডাক্তারের দোয়ান আরি মিঞা। বিঁয়ত ওগা মড়া মাইনষ্যর ঠাড্ লট্‌কাই দিয়ীল, হেই দোয়ানৎ।

করিম। ও—হিঁয়ত না ? আঁয়িও বলিখেলাত্তুন ফিরিবার ওক্তত্ মাইয়ার লাই এক পুর্গা ফাঁকি লই যাইয়ম্।

রহিম। ছালাম মাউঁ।

[উভয়ের প্রস্থান।]

Yet the people of Chittagong are proud of Bengali which they acknowledge as their mother-tongue; and some of our greatest modern poets, writers, and speakers, come from that district. Unity in language, as in all other matters, contributes to the glory of our national life, and this point should not be ignored by our brethren who speak only different forms of the same language.

CHAPTER III

I. CHANDIDAS II. VIDYAPATI

I. Chandidas

The poems of Chandidas and Vidyapati contrasted with other vernacular writings of the age.

The Bengali works to which we have referred in the last chapter scarcely rise to the level of decent literature. They were composed by peasants and villagers, and these were the people who loved to read them and hear them recited. This fact must be held to account for their somewhat gross turn of humour. Our language, as I have said in the first chapter, was greatly stimulated by the attention it received from the Moslem sovereigns of Gauda with their inevitably anti-Sanskritic culture. But it possessed inherent qualities of its own which were bound to have been recognised in course of time, even if chance had not brought the Muhammadans to this country. With poets like Chandidas and Vidyapati, the vernaculars of Bengal and Bihar could not long have been allowed to languish in the cold shade of Brahmanical disdain. These songs revealed its innate strength and gave unmistakable proof of its capacity to express the highest thoughts of the human mind. At the very time when rural folk were amusing themselves by a display of coarse wit in halting rhyme;—when no better themes than the plough, the furrow and the rice-field were to be found for the awakening of poetic inspiration; when the tales of the Siddhas and their powers were being sung in the villages, and gave the same amusment to illiterate people as fairy tales do to children; at that very period of fantastic and uncouth

composition,—now more valued for philological and historical considerations than for any intrinsic poetic merits,—the vernaculars of Bengal and Bihar were suddenly lit up by the rays of two brilliant stars, the precursors of an illustrious host who appeared on our literary horizon with the advent of Chaitanya Deva in the sixteenth century.

In order to understand the subjects treated by these two poets, one should first know what Parakiya Rasa is.

Parakiya Rasa

Parakiya Rasa, which is sometimes identified with Madhura Rasa, forms the essence of the Vaisnava theology. It is akin to the Sahajia cult, which, as explained in a previous chapter, means the romantic worship of a woman other than one's own wife. By a strange combination of circumstances, this form of idealism, though to the Hindu mind it seems lawless and unhallowed, rapidly attained a highly spiritual form in Bengal. In a country where the portals of the Zenana remain ever closed to the outside world,—where in the words of a Bengali poet, "the rays of the sun may not touch and even the moon is not allowed to see the fair one"—in such an environment as that of the Hindu household, society admits of no opportunity for the free meeting of men and women. Yet human nature is everywhere the same, and here as elsewhere stringent social rules are ineffective to defeat the impulse of personal choice and romantic love. The greater the opposition, the stronger is the impulse which cries for expression. In this country a blind Providence joins the hands of a mute pair who promise fidelity, often without knowing each other. When the situation grows monotonous, losing colour and poetry, both men and women are treated to lectures on purity of the nuptial vow, and to promises of rewards in the next world. They fully believe in the sanctity of marriage, and are ready to sacrifice sentiment to stern duty. But human passion cannot be altogether repressed, and where it over-rides the ordinances of the Sastras, it rushes forward with extraordinary strength, all the greater for the attempt at forcible suppression.

The Parakiya presents insurmountable difficulties in this country. Those who love have scarcely a chance of meeting; they may long for the sight of one another's faces, yet this good fortune not be theirs for days and weeks together. There are numerous descriptions of the romantic feelings which this peculiar situation creates, in the Vaisnava songs. Here are a few short extracts:—

The feelings approach spirituality.

"If he happens to see a single letter that forms my name, he pores over it in an ecstasy of joy." *

"He wanders about like a mad man and kisses the prints of my feet." †

"If he hears my name incidentally mentioned by any, his face is lit up with strange emotion and in vain does he try to hide the joy." ‡

In cases where this feeling has arisen, and the persons concerned possess noble moral qualities—social and moral barriers continuing to exercise their full power, it is easy to see that the highest romantic idealism is the inevitable result. We then find that the very restrictions imposed only accentuate the poetry or the passion. There is nothing which the lovers are not prepared to lay on the altar of this their highest dream. Such love is the nearest approach in common life to the mystic longings of the devotee's soul for the realisation of God; and, in fact, in the purity of its sentiment, and in its capacity for devotion and self-

* "আমার নামের একটি আখর পাইলে হরষে লেহ।"
Raisekhar.

† প্রতি পদ চিহ্ন চুম্বয়ে কান।"
Govindadas.

‡ "পরসঙ্গে নাম শুনি হরষয়ে হিয়া
পুলক ঢাকিতে নারি ঝরে পরকাশ।"
Chandidas.

‡ বিধুর নিকট নেহ পক্ষ পঞ্চবাণ।
নবই নবই রস ইহ পরিমাণ।
Chandidas.

sacrifice, it approaches spirituality. Hence Vaisnavism in Bengal adopted Parakiya as a symbol for the representation of divine love. Radha, the Princess, daughter of king Vrisa Bhanu and wife of Ayan Ghosa, falls in love with Krisna—the shepherd boy. But Radha is thought of by Vaisnavas as the human soul and Krisna as the incarnation of the Love of God. From this story every suspicion of grossness is understood to be eliminated, and the drama, played out amidst the pastoral scenery of the banks of the Jumna, conveys only the purity and holiness of a hymn of worship.

Chandidas and Vidyapati followed Jayadeva, and took this allegory for the expression in the vernacular of the highest form of the spiritual ideal.

Chandidas's life.

From reference given in one of Chandidas's poems, it appears that before 1403 A.D. he had composed 996 songs. He was born in the village of Chhatna in the district of Birbhum, but in early life, settled at the neighbouring village of Nannura, ten miles to the south-east of Bolpur—a station on the East Indian Railway. The site of his home—now reduced to a mere mound—is still to be seen at Nannura, where he discharged priestly functions in the temple of Vashuli Devi. This temple collapsed in course of time and a new one has lately been built on the old site where the goddess Vasuli is still worshipped.

'Mad Chandi.'

Chandidas, in the popular estimation was one of those souls who turn love-mad. In Eastern Bengal a man of eccentric tendencies is sometimes called 'পাগলা চণ্ডী' or 'a mad Chandi.' The word 'পাগলা' or 'mad fellow' is not rightly translated by the bold English word 'mad,'—for in Bengali it is tinged with a feeling of tenderness. 'পাগলা চণ্ডী' and 'পাগলা নিমাই' are adored by the people of Bengal. The epithet 'পাগলা' is akin to 'Dewana' in Persian. They imply the poetic excesses of a great genius and are far from being terms of contempt.

Chandidas's Rami.

We have already alluded to Chandidas's love for Rami, the washerwoman. At Nannura there is a spot which is pointed out as the site of Rami's homestead. The way in which the poet first fell in love, as related by the people of the locality, is curious. By one of those echoes from the future which are heard by the human mind, on that very day in his life when the stars were set for his meeting with Rami, he had a foregleam of his coming experiences in love. He had gone to purchase fish in the market. There he offered a certain price to a fish-wife for the fish he wished to buy, but at that very moment she gave a greater quantity for the same price to another; Chandidas was struck by this inequality of treatment and asked the fisher-woman's reason. She smiled and said "Oh but his case is altogether different. We love each other!" Chandidas stood silent for sometime, brooding over this reply. The sweetness of such a feeling attracted him, and it so happened that on that very day, Rami, the young washerwoman, in all the beauty of her maidenhood came into his sight and he fell over head and ears in love with her.

Declared fallen from the Brahmanic order.

The result was disastrous from a worldly point of view. He was a Brahmin and the washerwoman could take only the dust of his feet. Any other relation between them was not to be tolerated by society. Chandidas has told us in his songs that his love for Rami was pure, there being in it no element of passion. In his devotion to his lady, however, he would not now brook any restraint. He openly avowed his love in songs, and remained absorbed in a sort of reverie, neglecting the duties of his priestly calling. The love of Tasso for Leonara or even of Dante for Beatrice can scarcely lay claim to comparison with the martyrdom endured by this Bengali poet for the lady of his heart. His songs, though in one of them he addresses Rami as "mother," were considered very offensive by Hindu Society, and he was excommunicated, and dismissed from his office in the temple of Vashuli being

proclaimed by beat of drum as fallen from the Brahmanic order. A Brahmin in love with a washerwoman! It was monstrous, and as if he had been a putrid corpse, all contact with him was declared unholy.

Nakula intercedes.

Now Chandidas had a brother named Nakula who enjoyed great popularity with the Brahmin community. By his earnest intervention on behalf of his brother it was settled, though after repeated opposition, that Chandidas could be taken back into caste, if he would give an undertaking of good conduct in future and provide a feast for the Brahmins. Nakula arranged the feast, and when the Brahmins assembled at the dinner party, information reached Rami, the washerwoman, that Chandidas was being restored to caste on the promise of deserting her for ever. She fainted at the news, and when consciousness returned, began to weep, in violent paroxysms of grief. In great agony, she went to the Vakul groves where she had so often waited to catch a glimpse of Chandidas's face. But she could not by any means control her feeling and rest here; she went onward to the place where the invited party were partaking of the banquet served for them. She gazed at Chandidas and tears flowed from her eyes in unceasing stream. Never before had Rami looked in public upon the face of Chandidas! Chandidas forgot all the promises he had given to the Brahmins and in the worshipful manner of a priest, who approaches his house-hold goddess, appeared before her craving a thousand pardons. It is said that a wonderful vision was at this moment vouchsafed to only a few of the assembled Brahmins. They saw the four arms of the Divine mother of the universe shining forth behind the supposed washerwoman!

Rami and the wonderful vision about her.

But the rest of the Brahmins were very angry, and Chandidas remained an outcast as before. His boldness became far greater now. He openly addressed Rami as বেদমাতা গায়ত্রী—Gayatri, the mother of the Vedas!

Holy as the Gayatri.

Imagine the folly of this comparison! Gayatri, the great hymn of the Brahmins, is to them the holiest thing on earth or in heaven. For a Brahmin to say, therefore, that a washerwoman was as holy in his eyes as the Gayatri, was an affront to the whole orthodox community, the degree of which can scarcely be conceived by one outside the pale of Hindu society. But Chandidas had meant no more offence than a bird in its warblings; in the fulness of his heart the mouth had spoken. In his dreams of love, thoughts of caste, of Brahminhood or any other earthly consideration had no place.*

Chandidas's death.

Chandidas met with a tragic death. While he was amusing his audience by a recitation of his love-songs in the house of a friend at the village of Kirnahar near Nannura, the roof of the house is said to have collapsed; and the great poet who had suffered so much because of his love, passed away from the earth.

The subjects of his poems.

I have said that love in its most abstract and refined form was the theme of Chandidas's songs. His poems on Radha and Krisna fall under the classification usual to the love poems of the Vaisnavas. The Purva Raga or dawn of love; Dautya or message of love; Abhisara or secret going-forth, and Sambhoga-milana or meeting of the lovers, Mathura or the final separation, caused by Krisna's going to Mathura; Bhava-sammelana or union in spirit, and so forth.

Krisna and Radha.

Krisna is the Divine Incarnation worshipped by the Vaisnavas. He is represented as having a dark blue complexion. Dark blue suggests the predominating colour of the universe. We find it in the azure, in sky and ocean, in distant landscapes and in the immense verdure of pastoral meadows. On the head of Krisna is a crown of flowers and a plume of peacock's feathers reminding us of the rainbow. This symbolizes the various colours which adorn the

* For some of Chandidas's Songs on Rami, see above, pp. 43-44.

main dark-blue pervading the earth and the sky. He has a flute in his hand, and when he plays on it, the very Jumna bends out of her course signifying that with a person who has heard the call of his God, the result is irresistible, the course of his life is sure to change. The human soul is symbolized in Radha, the soul that, with its five finer senses, becomes instinct with new life, the moment God appears to it in all His glory.

A further analysis of the subject.

This is how the enlightened Vaisnavas interpret the love of Radha and Krisna. Let us explain this idea a little more elaborately. The devout Vaisnava believes that there is no paradise higher than the home, with all the social relationships which centre there. To take the motherly instinct first; when the child was helpless and entirely dependent on mercy, who gave it food? Who watched over it and protected it with the utmost care? It was the mother. Now a Vaisnava would say that it was not in the power of a frail woman to undergo such sacrifices; it was God's mercy needed for the protection of the helpless child that manifested itself in her motherly love. So the Vaisnavas see Him in the mother. This is 'বাৎসল্য-ভাব.' But this has also another aspect; when a man is made a father, he,—rough, rude-tempered, cruel man, becomes tenderness itself at the sight of the baby. Now such kindness was not inherent in his nature; and the Vaisnava sees in the child, who can evoke these feelings, the love of God Himself.

'Vatsalya Bhava

So in friendship also, which is called 'সখ্য'; in the devotion of a servant, which is called 'দাস্য' or in শান্ত, that quietness of soul which is attained by the elders of the family, living the life of the religious recluse, we have only other forms of the realization of divinity. Thus, the Vaisnava's environment throbs with a new life as he becomes conscious of divine love, and realizes the presence of God everywhere. His social and domestic ties only bind him with his God and in the voices of affection all around, he discovers the loving call of Him who wants all souls to come near Him,

'Sakhya' 'Dasya' and 'Shanta.'

but whose voice is not heard by ears deafened with the tumult of the world.

Madhura Bhava

But higher than anywhere else is the manifestation of God known to us in the love of man and woman. This embodies in itself the quintessence of all lofty emotions. This is the মধুরভাব which Chandidas has expressed so beautifully in his songs. In all this, a clue will be found to the point of view which accepts the love songs of the Vaisnavas—displaying, as these do, every form of intrigue and passionate idealism, between man and woman—as hymns of religious adoration.

The dark-blue complexion of Krisna.

In Chandidas's 'dawn of love,' Krisna appears before the mind of Radha as a spiritual vision. She has caught a glimpse of his dark-blue complexion. It has acted on her almost like some infatuation. She sits alone—lost in thought. The poet says* :—

"Oh what pain has overtaken Radha! She likes solitude. She sits alone and will listen to none. Pensive, she looks up to the sky and watches the clouds, her eyes do not move. She wants no food. She wears the yellow garb of a nun and looks like one. She unloosens the garlands from her hair, and pores over the beauty of her own dishevelled locks. With longing eyes she beholds the clouds and stretching out her hands, what does

* রাধার কি হৈল অন্তরে ব্যথা।
বসিয়া বিরলে থাকয়ে একলে,
না শুনে কাহার কথা॥
সদাই ধেয়ানে চাহে মেঘ পানে
না চলে নয়নের তারা।
বিরতি আহারে, রাঙ্গা বাস পরে
যেমত যোগিনী-পারা॥
এলাইয়া বেণী, ফুলের গাঁথনি
দেখয়ে খসায়ে চুলি।
আকুল নয়নে, চাহে মেঘ পানে
কি কহে দুহাত তুলি॥

she say to them? Her glance becomes fixed on the neck of the peacock. Love for Krisna, says Chandidas, has dawned on her heart."

Love for Krisna—the shepherd god, who wears the crown of peacock's feathers,—Krisna, whose beautiful dark-blue colour so smoothes the eyes! It is this which accounts for her reveries about the clouds, her own hair, and the neck of the peacock, referred to in the poem. All alike remind her of Krisna. She drinks deep of their beauty. She is indifferent to her physical comfort. She fasts and lives like a holy maiden—a Yogini we find in the lines! It is a strange abstract love, and symbolises also the spiritual love of the Vaisnavas! For this dark-blue complexion, as I have said, is taken to mirror the pervading colour of the Infinite, and, as an emblem of the divine presence, is sacred to all Vaisnavas. Many a time and oft it is told of Chaitanya Deva, the God-man of Nadia, that he saw the dark-blue clouds, reminding him of God, and swooned away in an ecstasy of love. To him the very contact with matter conveyed a spiritual idea. The objects of the senses were mere signs of the presence of One who was above the senses; form indicated in his eyes the formless, colour, the colourless, and all knowledge of the outward world,—the great Unknowable. This is the distinctive characteristic of Indian thought. It has a constant tendency towards idealization. The river Jumna and the village Vrindavana will be found on any Indian map. They are sanctified in the eyes of ordinary Vaisnavas. To them Krisna lived in the flesh and sported with the milk-maids in the groves of Vrindavana, ever hallowed by the love-making of the Divine shepherd. But the gross aspect changes, the whole matter becomes abstract, in the eyes of an enlightened

A tendency towards idealization.

এক দিঠি করি, ময়ূর ময়ূরী
কণ্ঠ করে নিরীক্ষণে।
চণ্ডীদাস কয়, নব পরিচয়
কালিয়া বঁধুর সনে।

devotee. To him the human mind is Vrindavana, and there the eternal play of the Divine love—the 'নিত্যলীলা'—is ever going on. Radha was married to Ayan Ghosa but she belonged to Krisna, as our souls, though bound to this world, repudiate these bonds on their spiritual awakening, and cling to God alone.

I may give an instance of this spiritualization of ideas even by rural and illiterate people in Bengal. In 1894 I was residing in Tippera. It was early in June; the clouds had gathered on the horizon, and round the Sataratan Matha of Comilla they had made the darkness of night a shade more black. An illiterate Vaisnava devotee, an old man of seventy, was singing the following song of Chandidas, playing on a lute made of a long gourd.*

An example. The story of an old man.

"Dark is the night and thick are the clouds.

"How could you, my beloved, come by the path in such a night?

"There in the garden, I see him standing in the rain;

"My heart breaks at the sight thereof.

"I say to you, O maidens, for many virtues of mine, my love has graciously come here to meet me.

"Within the house there are the elders and my sister-in-law is very cruel; I could not immediately run out to meet him.

* এ ঘোর রজনী মেঘের ঘটা
কেমনে আইলে বাটে।
আঙ্গিনার মাঝে বঁধুয়া তিতিছে
দেখিয়া পরাণ ফাটে॥
সই কি আর বলিব তোরে।
বহু পুণ্যফলে সে হেন বঁধুয়া
আসিয়া মিলল মোরে॥
ঘরে গুরুজন ননদী দারুণ
বিলম্বে বাহির হৈনু।
আহা মরি মরি সঙ্কেত করিয়া
কত না যাতনা দিনু॥

"Alas what anguish and pain have I not caused him by beckoning him to come!

"When I see how earnestly he loves me, fain would I bear the load of infamy on my head and set fire to my house!

"All the troubles suffered for my sake he takes as happiness and he is only sorry if he sees me sad.

"The story of this love, says Chandidas, will gladden the world."

While the old man was singing, I suddenly heard his voice become choked with tears, and he could not proceed any more. On his coming to himself after this display of feeling, I asked him the cause of his tears. He said, it was the song. The song, I said, described a secret love-affair, and where could be the pathos in it that gave occasion for such an outburst of feeling in an old man?

He explained to me that he did not consider the song as an ordinary love-song. Here is his interpretation,—"I am full of sins. My soul is covered with darkness. In deep distress I beckoned Him to come to me. The merciful God came. I found Him waiting for me at the gate of my house. It cannot be any pleasure to Him to come to a great sinner like me,—the path is so foul, but by my supreme good fortune the merciful God took it. The world, I live in, has left no door open for him Relations and friends laugh, or even are hostile, but remembering His great mercy what can a sinner do, except desert his house and all, court any abuse of the world, and turn a

বঁধুর পীরিতি আরতি দেখিয়া
মোর মনে হেন করে।
কলঙ্কের ডালি মাথায় করিয়া
আনল ভেজাই ঘরে॥
আপনার দুখ সুখ করি মানে
আমার দুখের দুখী॥
চণ্ডীদাস কহে বঁধুর পীরিত
শুনিয়া জগৎ সুখী॥

sannyasin!" The thought of His mercy choked my voice—"Oh dark is the night and thick are the clouds, how could you, my beloved, come by the path." But He exposes Himself to the rain, because in order to help the sinner He is ready to suffer."

Tears were still dropping from the eyes of the old man and as with his right hand he was still playing on the lute, he hummed again and again "Dark is the night and thick are the clouds."

Chandidas's songs omit no particulars of human sentiments. The longing regret at parting; the pleasure, even ecstasy, of stealthy meetings at odd moments and the devices used for such meetings are described by him in simple and unadorned style, without many classical figures. Indeed the scantiness of these is what strikes the reader. But the descriptions are vividly realistic, at once presenting a picture to the mind. Krisna comes to Radha in the guise of a woman-physician and touches her hand to feel the pulse. He comes as a magician and the women of the village assemble behind the screens to witness his feats. His labours are rewarded by one stolen glance at Radha's face. He comes to her as the barber-wife and obtains a minute's interview; as a nun, and on the pretext of giving a blessing, whispers a word of love to her. Radha also goes to meet him in the disguise of a shepherd boy, and the pastoral scenes are enlivened by a poetic touch describing their talk. In all this, as I have said, Chandidas repudiates classical similes and the language of convention. We quote some extracts from his writings.

Chandidas omits no detail of human love.

*"Of such love no one ever heard. Their hearts are bound to each other by their very nature. They are in each other's presence, yet they weep fearing a parting. If one is hidden from the other for half a second, they feel the pangs of death.

Nothing to compare with this love.

* এমন পীরিতি কভু নাহি দেখি শুনি।
পরাণে পরাণ বাঁধা আপনি আপনি॥

Just as a fish dies, when dragged from the water, so do they, if parted from one another. Among men such love was never heard of. You say that the sun loves the lily, but the lily dies in the frost, and the sun lives on happily. You say the bird Chataka and the clouds are lovers, but the clouds do not give a drop of water to the bird before their time. The flower and the bee, it is said, adore each other; but if the bee does not come to the flower, the flower does not go to the bee. It is foolish to describe the bird Chakora as a lover of the moon—their status is so different. There is nothing, says Chandidas, to compare with this love."

Parting.

* "Such love was never seen or heard of. Moments to them are years. In each other's arms, they yet feel the pangs of the approaching separation. With the edge of his cloth he fans her, and if she turns her head a little, he trembles with fear apprehending a parting. When the meeting comes to an end, my soul, as it were, leaves my body. My heart breaks to relate to you, O maidens, the pangs of parting. I quite believe you, says Chandidas."

দুহুঁ কোরে দুহুঁ কাঁদে বিচ্ছেদ ভাবিয়া।
আধ তিল না দেখিলে যায় যে মরিয়া॥
জল বিনু মীন যহু কবহুঁ না জীয়ে।
মানুষে এমন প্রেম কোথা না শুনিএ॥
ভানু কমল বলি সেহ হেন নয়।
হিমে কমল মরে ভানু সুখে রয়॥
চাতক জলদ কহি সে নহে তুলনা।
সময় নহিলে সে না দেয় এক কণা॥
কুসুমে মধুপ কহি সেহ নহে তুল।
না আইলে ভ্রমর আপনি না যায় কুল॥
কি ছার চকোর চাঁদ দুহুঁ সম নহে।
ত্রিভুবনে হেন নাহি চণ্ডীদাসে কহে॥

* এমন পীরিতি কভু দেখি নাই শুনি।
নিমিখে মানয়ে যুগ কোরে দুয় মানি॥
সমুখে রাখিয়া করে বসনের বা।
মুখ ফিরাইলে তার ভয়ে কাঁপে গা॥

*"' May I go, now,' he speaks this thrice. O how many kisses and embraces with these words! He proceeds half a step and looks back to gaze at me. He looks at my face in such anguish as I cannot describe. He places his hands in mine and asks me to swear by himself. O how he flatters me to get the promise of another meeting! His love is so deep and his prayers are so earnest, says Chandidas, let him remain in the heart for ever."

We are only too conscious of the fact that the beauty of the original is lost in the translation. It is always difficult to translate deep sayings into another language. Underlying the modes, experiences and make-shifts of human love with which these songs apparently deal, there is a mighty current of love divine which originates here, and streams out along its heavenward course. Some of Chandidas's songs sound like hymns to God. Here is one :

The spiritual side.

† "Thou art, O Beloved, my very life.

"My body and mind I have offered unto thy service,

রজনী প্রভাত হৈলে কাতর হিয়ায়।
দেহ ছাড়ি যেন মোর প্রাণ চলি যায়॥
সে কথা কহিতে সই বিদরে পরাণ।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে ধনি সব পরমাণ॥

• আমি যাই আমি যাই বলে তিন বোল।
কত না চুম্বন দেই কত বার কোল॥

• • •

পদ আধ যায় প্রিয়া চাঞা পালটিয়া।
বদন নিরখে কত কাতর হইয়া॥
করে কর ধরি পিয়া শপথি দেয় মোরে।
পুন দরশন লাগি কত চাটু বোলে॥
নিগূঢ় পীরিতি পিয়ার আর ত বহু।
চণ্ডীদাস কহে হিয়ার মাঝারে রহু॥

† বধু তুমি সে আমার প্রাণ।
দেহ মন আদি তোহারে সঁপেছি
কুল শীল জাতি মান॥

"My family prestige, my good name, my caste, my honour and all.

"Thou art the lord of the universe, O Krisna, adored by the Yogis.

"I am but a poor milkmaid and know not how to worship thee!

"Yet do I offer myself, my soul and body, unto thee as the sacrifice of love.

"Thou art my lord, thou art my path,—my mind seeks not for any other object.

"The world scorns me because of this love, yet do I not regret it.

"Abuse is like a garland of flower about my neck for thy dear sake.

"Thou alone knowest whether I am pure or impure.

"I know not even what is good or bad for me.

"Virtue and vice, says Chandidas, are alike to me. I know them not, but know thy feet alone."

অখিলের নাথ তুমি হে কালিয়া
যোগীর আরাধ্য ধন।
গোপ গোয়ালিনী হাম অতি হীনা
না জানি ভজন পূজন॥
পীরিতি রসেতে ঢালি তনু মন
দিয়াছি তোমার পায়।
তুমি মোর পতি তুমি মোর গতি
মনে নাহি আন ভায়॥
কলঙ্কী বলিয়া ডাকে সব লোকে
তাহাতে নাহিক দুখ।
তোমার লাগিয়া কলঙ্কের হার
গলায় পরিতে সুখ॥
সতী বা অসতী তোমাতে বিদিত
ভাল মন্দ নাহি জানি।
কহে চণ্ডীদাস পাপ পুণ্য মম
তোহারি চরণ খানি।

Some of Chandidas's songs of Bhavasammilana (Union in spirit) have been adopted with slight changes by the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal and are sung in their churches during divine service.

God as lover.

The paradox that has to be understood is that Krisna throughout such passages means God. Yet he is represented as a youth, standing at a gate, trying to waylay the beloved maiden, attempting to entrap the soul, as it were, into a clandestine meeting. This which is so inconceivable to a purely modern mind, presents no difficulty at all to the Vaisnava devotee. To him God is the lover himself, the sweet flowers, the fresh grass, the gay sound heard in the woods, are direct messages and tokens of love to his soul, bringing to his mind at every instant that loving God, whom he pictures as ever anxious to win the human heart.

II. *Vidyapati*

Vidyapati not a Bengali poet.

Vidyapati is not, strictly speaking, a Bengali poet. He belonged to Mithila (Dwarbhanga) and composed his songs in the Vernacular of those districts. Yet we include his name in a history of Bengali literature. This will appear anomalous, but our people have established their claims upon the Maithil poet in a manner that leaves no room for disputing our action. Vidyapati's songs have found a prominent place in all the compilations of the Vaisnavas current in Bengal, and they are sung here by the Vaisnava singers on all occasions. In fact a quarter of a century ago, it was believed by Bengali readers that Vidyapati was a Bengali poet. Recently, however, when a true account of his life was unearthed by the researches of scholars like Babu Raj Krisna Mukherjee and

Dr. Grierson, we began to question the propriety of our claim. Vidyapati's songs, as known to Bengalis, are in many respects different from the versions found in the Maithil language. The days of Vidyapati were the days of the glory of the Mithila University and at that time there was a great interchange of thought between Mithila and Bengal. Hence Bengali poems dealing with the love of Radha and Krisna found entrance into Mithila and the versions of those poems current there are full of Maithil idioms and expressions. The poems of Govinda Das, the great Bengali poet, are still known in Bihar, although the people there have changed their language by introducing many Maithil words and idioms which sound strange to the Bengali ear. In the same manner. Vidyapati's poems have passed through changes in the hands of the Bengali poets who recast them. The reader may compare the recensions current in the two countries from a collection of Vidyapati's poems made by Dr. Grierson. One looks very much like a translation of the other, yet the Bengali recension is sometimes marked by as much genius as the original itself. It not only retains the sweetness but occasionally improves upon it by introducing new sparkling thoughts. Some of the best songs attributed to Vidyapati— as " জনম অবধি হাম রূপ নেহারিনু " —are found only in the Bengali recension and the people of Mithila have not preserved them in their collection, nor even heard of them. It is the popular belief that Vasanta Rai, uncle of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore, prepared the Bengali recension of Vidyapati in the 16th century. Vidyapati's songs in Bengali glow with poetry, colour, and wealth of expression, and, as we have said, are quite equal to their Maithil originals. Under these circumstances Vidyapati must be counted as Bengali poet, at least in this version, and it would be impossible now to expunge his poems from the compilations current in Bengal, where they have for the last three centuries found a prominent place.

Vidyapati's poems recast by Bengali poets.

And are now inseparable from Bengali songs.

Vidyapati was a resident of Visfi—a village in the sub-division of Sitamarhi, near Jarail, in the district of Darbhanga. This village he obtained as a grant from Raja Siva Sinha. Vidyapati enjoyed the patronage of Siva Sinha, Lacchima Devi, Biswas Devi, Narasinha Deva and other sovereigns of Mithila. The copper-plate grant by which Raja Siva Sinha is said to have conferred on the poet the title of Nava Jay Deva together with the ownership of the village Visfi is dated 1400 A.D.* Some scholars consider this copper-plate to be forged. The date in the inscription is given in Hijira era along with other eras, but the Hijira era was by the unanimous opinion of historians, introduced at a much later period by the Emperor Akbar. The characters of the inscription, besides, do not bear the stamp of that early period when the grant is said to have been made. The copper-plate, has been, on these grounds, declared to be unreliable. There is, however, no doubt that the village Visfi was granted by Siva Sinha to Vidyapati. The poet himself speaks of this grant in one of his poems; † and the descendants of Vidyapati have for long years held possession of the village. The tradition prevalent in the country also supports the grant. The probable causes of the anomalies found in the copper-plate inscription may be thus explained. The copper-plate would

The date of a copper-plate grant.

* "অঙ্কে লক্ষ্মণসেন ভূপতিমিতি বহ্নি গ্রহৈঃ অঙ্কিতে"

In 293 of Laksman Sen's era.

† "জনম দাতা মোর, গণপতি ঠাকুর, মৈথিলী দেশে কর বাস।
পঞ্চ গৌড়াধিপ শিবসিংহ ভূপ কৃপা করি দেউ নিজ পাশ॥
বিসফি গ্রাম, দান করল মুঝে, রহতহি রাজ-সন্নিধান।
লছিমা চরন ধ্যানে, কবিতা নিকসয়ে বিদ্যাপতি ইহ ভাণ॥"

My father's name is Ganapati Thakur, and we are natives of Mithila. Siva Sinha, the Lord of 'Five Indies' took me to his court through kindness. He made a gift of the village Visfi to me, and my poetry flows at the contemplation of the feet of Lacchima Devi (the Queen).

be naturally in the custody of the eldest member of the family, and the other descendants interested in the endowment would, according to custom, be permitted to retain copies of it. Supposing that the original copper-plate was lost, the descendants were no doubt reduced to the necessity of preparing another from the copies they had with them, in order to satisfy Raja Todor Mall who surveyed the lands during Akbar's time. If this supposition is correct, it accounts for the introduction of the Hijira era into it, and also for the comparatively modern style of the characters used in the inscription.

The dates of Raj Panji not reliable.

The court-register or Raj Panji of Mithila records the year of Rajah Siva Sinha's ascent to the throne as 1446 A.D. This, however, is also open to objection, as in a poem of Vidyapati we have a mention of the date of Raja Siva Sinha's coronation as 1400 A.D. There are also other reasons which make the dates given by the court-register of Mithila of doubtful authenticity. There are conflicting opinions about these dates. But recently there has come to light another document which refers to a date in regard to Vidyapati and which we believe to be of unquestionable authenticity. The MS. of an annotated copy of Kavya Prakasa in Sanskrit, lately recovered, shows that it was copied by one Deva Sarma by the orders of the poet Vidyapati in November, 1398 A.D. The MS. of Bhagavata in Vidyapati's own handwriting is also preserved; but the date of the copy given on the last page, has not yet been deciphered. The two pundits, deputed by the Asiatic Society of Bengal for the purpose, disagree in their readings.

1398 A.D.

Lived probably a whole century.

From the various evidences which we have come across, we can declare with certainty that Vidyapati was born towards the end of the 14th century and lived to a good old age, probably covering the whole of the 15th century. He was a contemporary of Chandidas and was attracted by his great rival's fame to undertake a journey to meet him. Many of the later Vaisnava poets have described

the interview between these two eminent men, which is said to have taken place on the banks of the Ganges in the spring season.

Interview between Chandidas and Vidyapati.

The talk in which the poets are said to have indulged was appertaining to love and its higher flights. It is said that Chandidas made an impression on the Maithil poet, which is distinctly traceable in his later poems, chiefly about Bhaba Sammelana. In the biography of Advaitacharyya of Santipur—the veteran saint of the Vaisnava community, written by Ishan Nagara in 1560 A.D., it is related that the saint while touring in Mithila, saw Vidyapati there. The poet is described as a person of handsome appearance, and an excellent singer. This meeting between Advaita and Vidyapati took place about the year 1458 or 27 years before Chaitanya Deva was born.

Advait met Vidyapati in 1458 A.D.

His patron.

Vidyapati refers to Giasuddin Toglak in one of his songs and in another to Nasir Shah. But with very few exceptions his songs as a whole are dedicated to Raja Siva Sinha—his great patron and friend.

Vidyapati was a scion of a distinguished family of scholars. His father, Ganapati Thakur dedicated his celebrated Sanskrit work 'Ganga Bhakti Tarangini' to the memory of his deceased illustrious patron Maharaj Ganesvara of Mithila. Ganapati's father, Jaya Datta was not only a great Sanskrit scholar, but was distinguished also for his piety and saintliness of character. He obtained the title of 'Yogeswara' for these qualities. The father of Jaya Datta and the great grandfather of Vidyapati was the illustrious Viresvara who compiled a code of rules for the guidance of every-day-life of the Maithil Brahmins. The Viresvara Paddhati, as his great work is called, is almost as much revered in Mithila as the Astavimsati Tattva of Raghunandan in Bengal. Another point showing the social rank of our poet is that for several generations, his ancestors had discharged ministerial functions in the court of the Maithil sovereigns.

Vidyapati's ancestors.

His Sanskrit works.

Vidyapati was a voluminous writer. Besides his ballads in the Vernacular, of which nearly 800 are now recovered, he wrote the following Sanskrit works :—

1. Purusa Pariksa, 2. Saiva Sarvasvasara, 3. Dana Vakyavali, 4. Vivadasara, 5. Gaya-Pattan, 6. Ganga Viksyavali, 7. Durga Bhakti Tarangini, 8. Kirtilata.

My own criticism deals however with his Vernacular poems alone.

His songs about Radha and Kriana

Vidyapati sang much in the strain of Chandidas; as a Sanskrit poet of eminence, he was held in great admiration in the court of Raja Siva Sinha. His own heart, however, was in the songs which he composed in the Vernacular. In the brilliance of his metaphors and similes, in the choice of his expressions, and in the higher flights of his poetic fancy, he over-shadows all Vernacular poets; and Chandidas, the child of nature, is no match for him. When one reads the songs of both the poets, the ordinary ear is charmed with the elegant expressions of the Maithil bard; to those who dive deeper into the inner yearnings of the human soul, Chandidas will seem a far greater apostle of love; his simple words will leave a more lasting impression, than all the literary embellishments and poetic flights of Vidyapati. Yet Vidyapati also sometimes scales the heights attained by Chandidas. In the 'Purvaraga,' 'Sambhoga Milana.' 'Abhisara' and 'Mana'[1] Vidyapati is more of a poet than a prophet. There is not much of spirituality, but a good deal of sensuality, in his earlier love songs. He ransacks the whole classical store to find an apt simile and is never weary of applying as much of this as is within his knowledge, like the sound scholar of rhetoric that

His metaphors and similes.

[1] Lover's quarrels.

he is. To give an example: the eyes of Radha are compared to a lotus,—to a bee. These are commonplace and stereotyped similes; but the poet observes for himself in what aspect the comparison holds good and makes his descriptions greatly interesting.

Radha's eyes compared to lotus and to bee.

"The pupil of her eye is like a bee resting on the lotus, the breeze driving it into a corner,"[1]—this refers to the sidelong glances of Radha's playful eyes.

"The pupil of her eye is like a bee, so intoxicated with the honey of the lotus that it cannot fly away,"[2]—this refers to the absorbed looks of Radha while brooding over her love.

"Her eyes beautified with Kajjala, have assumed a purple hue, they look like the petals of lotus coloured with vermilion,"[3]—this is a picture of Radha just after bathing when the eyes grow reddish. The Indian poets are lavish in using metaphors to indicate the beauty of the eyes,—of those glances which bear messages to lovers, for their subjects can hardly find an opportunity to speak or write to each other. The stolen glances are the only means of intercourse of soul, they are the speech of love, and are minutely watched by the poets—চঞ্চল নয়নে বঙ্ক নেহারণী is a significant point in all such stories.

The poet begins with Radha's বয়ঃসন্ধি or dawn of youth. This is the time when she is to fall in love with Krisna. She has reached an age when one would not mistake her for a child yet would hesitate to call her a woman. If at times she moves with the blithe steps of a child, she immediately mends her motion and walks slowly with the grace of a maiden. The merry ring of her laughter may remind one of a child's voice, but she controls

Vayas-Sandhi or Dawn of youth.

[1] জনু ইন্দীবর পবনে ঠেলল, অলি-ভরে উলটায়।

[2] লোচন জনু থির ভৃঙ্গ আকার। মধুমাতল কিয়ে উড়ই না পার॥

[3] নীরে নিরঞ্জন লোচন রাতা। সিন্দুরে মণ্ডিত যনি পঙ্কজ পাতা॥

herself quickly, and a sweet smile such as befits a modest damsel is displayed in the soft curve of her coral lips. The beauty that has come so newly to her person is a surprise to herself. The freedom of childhood is gone; and her eyes become downcast if a whisper is heard. While busy with her toilet, in the company of her maidens, she silently listens to their talk of love; and if any of them notices this, she rebukes her, with mingled smiles and tears.

Radha—a creation of beauty.

Vidyapati's Radha is a special creation of beauty. She is a dream seen in the flesh. Where her gentle steps may tread, water-lilies spring up at the touch of her feet. The charms of her person are a revelation; she can hardly hide the joy that a consciousness of it brings to her mind. Her smile is like the nectar which gives life and immortality. Her glances are Cupid's own arrows, not five, but a hundred thousand—shot forth on all sides!

When she goes on Abhisara to meet her lover, the poet creates a wilderness of lavish metaphors. The idea is here overloaded with classical and conventional figures. Yet through this cloud of imagery, appears a vision of beauty. She is, says the poet, like a luminous wand, created by the lightning; like a golden tendril; the rich clusters of her hair fall loose behind, black as the clouds or as the bees, but soft and curling like the tender *Saibala* (moss). Her eye-brows are bent, in the graceful curves of a bow, and her forehead beams with the lustre of the moon. The playfulness of her eyes reminds one of the bird Khanjana; her beautiful nose is like the Tila flower; her lips have the hue of coral, and so on. Radha's lovely form glows with shy happiness at the thought of this first meeting.

The first meeting.

She goes out in the dark night to meet her lover, covering herself with a *Sari* of dark silk. She trusts to her guides, but when brought to the bower made by the maidens for the interview, she hesitates; she fears to enter; her heart is full of tenderness; and love, but a feeling of shyness and delicacy holds her back. The maidens lead her in inspite of her

gentle protests, and she finds herself face to face with Krisna. Her eyes droop; she dares not lift them even to see that beautiful face at which she could never be weary of gazing. The tenderness of the meeting is indescribable. The delicate maiden cannot say one word in response to the many, with which she is greeted; and when she comes back she is overwhelmed with remorse at the recollection of her own failure. By degrees, however, all this is changed. In a subsequent canto she is found relating to her maidens the manœuvres adopted by Krisna in order to meet her, such as at the moment when her sister-in-law was asleep, resting her head on her lap, and he came gently from behind her, to steal a kiss. In these descriptions, as I have said, there is an exuberance of sensuousness, and the songs of Vidyapati would never have passed for religious writings, if in the last canto he had not suddenly risen high above such sentiments and repeatedly given to the whole story a spiritual interpretation. Of this I may give a few specimens. Radha describes Krisna. He is, she says, a flower to be placed upon her head; he is the collyrium (অঞ্জন) that makes her eyes beautiful; he is a precious necklace clinging about the neck; she cannot, she says, conceive of life without him,—he is to her what water is to the fish, or wings to a bird—the very breath of her being and the only object of her life. By a torrent of such similies which arise spontaneously, but are bound to lose their beauty in translation, she describes herself as altogether merged and lost in the consciousness of her love. Alas, she has told all, but, though loving with all her might, she has failed to grasp him; giving all that her soul is capable of offering, she feels that Krisna remains unrevealed to her, as ever. In the last line she turns suddenly, with the cry, 'Tell me, O Krisna, what art thou?' This touching cry "তুহুঁ কৈছে মাধব কহবি মোয়" is wholly spiritual and mystic, it is the agonised expression of the infinitely little in presence of the infinitely great.

Krisna's stealthy visits.

The spiritual aspect.

In the songs called Mathura, Vidyapati creates tender pathos by describing Krisna's desertion of Gokula. The shepherd has left the groves of his child-hood.

Krisna's desertion of Gokula

* "Krisna has gone to Mathura. Alas, Gokula is deserted.

"The bird Suka weeps in its cage.

"The cows look up wistfully, and all their gestures point to Mathura.

"No longer do shepherds and milkmaids meet on the banks of the Jumna."

[1] "O maids, how can I go to those banks again and bear to see the pleasant bowers without him!

"The beloved groves where he and the maidens played amongst the flowers, how do they rise before me and yet I bear to live!"

The maidens speak of Krisna's return, but Radha feels that she is about to die, and says :—

[2] "If the lily has been withered by the cold rays of the winter-moon, what joy can it have in the coming of the spring!

"If the seeds have been destroyed by the summer sun, what will it avail that there be showers afterwards!

"Dying of thirst I came to the ocean. Alas! not a drop had I to quench my thirst!

* "হরি কি মথুরাপুর গেল। আজু গোকুল শূন ভেল॥
রোদতি পিঞ্জর শুকে। দেখু ধাবই মাথুর মুখে॥
অব সোই যমুনা কূলে। গোপ গোপী নাহি বুলে॥"

[1] "কৈসে হম যাওব যমুনা-তীর। কৈসে নিহারব কুঞ্জ কুটীর॥
সহচরী সঙ্গে যহাঁ করল ফুল থেরি।
কৈসে জীয়ব তাহি নেহারি॥"

[2] "হিমকর-কিরণে নলিনী যদি জারব কি করব মাধবী মাসে॥

"Weary I came to the Sandal tree, but the sweet scent ceased.

"I came for soothing to the light of the moon, and it began to scorch me with fire.

"The month of Sravana with its raining floods had not a drop for me.

"The Kalpataru* is barren for me.

"O Krisna, O Lord of my soul! I sought refuge in thee, but found it not.

"The poet Vidyapati is silent from wonder."

Though Radha speaks in the language of despair, she is nevertheless conscious of the all-pervading mercy of God. The images here are all similes for Krisna himself. He is the ocean, the sandal tree, the moon-light, etc.

The mourner is about to die of her longing for the return of Krisna. Here are a few beautiful familiar lines :—

The touching appeal when death seems near.

† "I shall surely die, says Radha, but to whom can I trust my Krisna?

অন্তর তপনতাপে যদি জারব, কি করব বারিদ মেহে।
সিন্ধু-নিকটে যদি কণ্ঠ শুখায়ব, কো দূর করব পিয়াসা।
চন্দন-তরু যদি সৌরভ ছোড়ব, শশধর বরিখব আগি।
* * * কি মোর করম অভাগী।
শ্রাবণ মাহ ঘন, বিন্দু না বরিখব সুরতরু বাঞ্ছক ছন্দে।
গিরিধর সেবি, ঠাম নাহি পাওব, বিদ্যাপতি রহ ধন্দে।"

* The Tree of Plenty in Indra's Heaven.

† "মরিব মরিব সখি, নিচয় মরিব,
কানু হেন গুণনিধি কারে দিয়ে যাব।
তোমরা যতেক সখী আছ মরু সঙ্গে।
মরণ-কালে কৃষ্ণ নাম লিখ আমার অঙ্গে॥

"O ye maidens, my companions, cover me in my last hour, with the name of Krisna (lit., write on me the name of Krisna).

"O Lalita, friend of my heart, let the last sound, I hear, be the name of Krisna.

"Burn not my body, O maidens, nor float it on the stream; but bind it on the boughs of a Tamala-tree; and let me rest for ever in its dark blue colour.

"If it should sometime chance that Krisna come to these groves again, I shall be called back to life at the sight of him.

"Sing in my years, O maidens, the name of Krisna, that hearing it, I may expire."

The writing of the name of Krisna on the body may be a strange idea to my foreign readers, but those who have visited India will perhaps have seen the name of Krisna inscribed on the forehead, breast and arms of many Vaisnavas. At the moment of death, it is a duty always observed by the relative to recite the name of Krisna in the ears of the dying. These love songs, therefore, as I have said, cannot be dissociated from their pervading religious idea.

The spiritual significance.

ললিতা প্রাণের সখি মঝু দিহ কাণে।
মরা দেহ পড়ি যেন কৃষ্ণ নাম শুনে॥
না পুড়িও রাধা অঙ্গ না ভাসাইও জলে।
মরিলে বাঁধিয়া রেখ তমালেরি ডালে॥
সেই ত তমাল তরু কৃষ্ণ বর্ণ হয়।
অবিরত তনু মোর তাহে যেন রয়॥
কবহু সো পিয়া যদি আসে বৃন্দাবনে।
পরাণ পায়ব হাম পিয়া দরশনে॥
শ্রবনহ শ্যাম-নাম করু গান।
শুনয়িতে নিকসউ কঠিন পরাণ॥"

Chandidas and Vidyapati compared.

Of Chandidas and Vidyapati, it may be said that the one sings as impelled by nature,—his is a cry from the depths of the soul; literary embellishments are lost sight of; poetry wells up like a natural fountain whose pure flow contains no coarse grain of earth. The other is a conscious poet, and a finished scholar, whose similes and metaphors are brilliant poetical feats; they at once captivate the ear, and the boldness of colour in the pictures, presented to the mind, dazzles the eyes. The scenes of sensuality, and lust are redeemed by others which are platonic and spiritual,—a strange combination of holy and unholy, of earthly and heavenly. His earlier poems are full of sensualism, —his later, of mystic ideas. Chandidas is a bird from the higher regions, where earthly beauties may be scant, but which are nearer heaven, for all that. Vidyapati moves all day in the sunny groves and floral meadows of the earth, but in the evening rises high and overtakes his fellow poet.*

* Complete editions of the love-songs of Vidyapati and Chandidas are expected, shortly to be published with copious annotations by two Bengali scholars. Vidyapat iis being edited by Babu Nagendranath Gupta under the patronage and directions of Babu Saradacharan Mitter, late Judge of the Calcutta High Court and the credit of collecting a large number of hitherto unknown poems of Chandidas belongs to Babu Nilratan Mukherjee, Head Master, Kirnahar School in the district of Birbhum Each of the two compilations will contain about a thousand poems or *padas*. This is far ahead of the number of *padas* hitherto extant in the country.

CHAPTER IV

The Pauranic Renaissance

1. The leading characteristics of the Renaissance. Faith in God and in the Brahmin.

2. Vernacular recensions of Sanskrit works. General remarks.

 (*a*) The Ramayana.
 (*b*) The Mahabharata.
 (*c*) The Bhagavata.
 (*d*) The Chandi of Markandeya.

3. The conception of Siva in the Renaissance and songs in honour of him.

4. The Sakti-cult and its development in Bengal. Poems in honour of—

 (*a*) Manasa Devi.
 (*b*) Chandi Devi.
 (*c*) Ganga Devi.
 (*d*) Sitala Devi.
 (*e*) Laksmi Devi, Sarasvati Devi and Sasthi Devi.

5. Dharma Mangal poems recast by the Brahmins.

6. Poems in honour of Dakshina Rai (God of tigers). Some remarks about the poems.

1. The leading characteristics of the Renaissance— Faith in God and in the Brahmin

I have tried to show that the revival of Hinduism, which had reached full development amongst the vernacular-reading classes in Bengal by the 15th century, was effective in bringing society back into discipline and order, thus counteracting those vices of free-thinking and gross Tantrikism to which it had succumbed

The reactionary movement.

during the last days of Buddhism. In written language, metrical forms, aiming at rythmical perfection, gradually found favour, and Sanskritic expressions were preferred to the loose Prakrita which in the Buddhistic age had been the current dialect of this country. Everywhere a reactionary movement—a tendency to correct and embellish the current forms—was observed. Both social and literary movements were imbued with this spirit.

Creed of devotion.

But the chief point in the revival of Hinduism was the promulgation of the creed of devotion and trust in God, which tended to balance the scepticism of the later forms of Buddhism. Buddhism had in its flourishing days observed a strict moral code. The metaphysical side of religion was rejected by Buddha as vain speculation. In the Ambattha Sutta, he declares theological discussion to be utterly fruitless, and advises his followers to stick to the practical matters of high moral principles and works of philanthropy and charity.

When, however, Buddhism with its noble laws of character declined, the masses felt that the moral code was unavailing without faith. From one extreme, the human mind always runs to the other. In the natural evolution of spiritual thought, the negative aspect changes till it takes a positive character. The Hindu reaction put faith in place of laws. Thus moral principles, self-discipline, and introspection, the watch-words of Buddhism, were thrown into the back-ground, and faith in God became the motto and the catch-word of the Pauranic Renaissance. The Hindu revivalists, in running to such an extreme, perhaps overdid their part. They preached that man, being essentially a creature of circumstances, could not at all depend on self-help. He needs divine grace at every step. Faith, they said, was the only thing to be sought for,—not only in order to attain salvation, but for the purpose of building up character. They went so far as to declare that it was not in the power of a human being to commit so many crimes in life as could not be expiated by uttering the name of God once in sincere faith!

The dissemination of such ideas was necessarily accompanied by the growth of the Brahmanic power. As a set-off against the lawlessness of the Buddhistic free-thinkers, absolute obedience to the leaders of society was enforced. The Muhammadans, as the new ruling race, did not interfere with the social and spiritual movements of the Hindus. Full powers, thus, came to be vested in the leaders of society. Without a reverence for the promulgators, truth loses much of its force. Hence in the Pauranic Renaissance the Brahmin came to the front, and stood next to God in popular estimation. Hinduism thus became in a far greater sense than ever before, Brahmanism, or a Brahmanic cult.

The growth of the Brahmanic power.

A creed of faith has, often, much in it that is peculiar; it has its weak points which every rational man can laugh at. Yet a man of faith, blindly devoted to his faith, is often a better man than the rationalistic sceptic. There were many absurdities in the propaganda of the Hindu reaction. The following lines in Kasiram Das's Mahabharata show the nature of romances invented and the modifications introduced into older stories, at this time, in order to raise the Brahmins above the level even of the Gods:

"It is a Brahmin's anger which, like fire, burnt down the great dynasty of the Yadavas and of Sagara—the distinguished king of the Lunar race. It is a Brahmin's anger, again, which has placed a blot on the Moon's surface. Even the god of fire, Agni Deva,

Fables about the Brahmins.

* যাঁর ক্রোধে যদুকুল হইল নির্ব্বংশ।
যাঁর ক্রোধে নষ্ট হৈল সগরের বংশ॥
যাঁর ক্রোধে কলঙ্কী হইল কলানিধি।
যাঁর ক্রোধে লবণ হইল সলিলধি॥
যাঁর ক্রোধে অনল হইল সর্ব্বভক্ষ।
যাঁর পদচিহ্ন ধরে নারায়ণবক্ষ॥"

Kasidas's Mahabharata.

and the god of the sky, Indra Deva, have been subject in their turn to a Brahmanical curse. A Brahmin's anger has made the waters of the great sea saline. Even the greatest of the gods, Visnu, bears the mark of a Brahmin's kick on his bosom."

Kasiram Das describes the incident of the curse of a Brahmin, under which Raja Pariksit was to die of snake-bite within a week. The snake had not yet appeared at the fixed hour. The Raja grew restless, and when a worm was found in a fruit presented to him, he cried out, "Let this worm become a snake and bite me, rather than that a Brahmin's word should prove untrue."* There is nothing corresponding to this line in the original epic, which makes it only the more significant in Bengali, as showing to what an extent Brahmin-worship was developed in this country in a subsequent age.

A Brahmin was called Bhudeva or god on earth. In the period of the Upanisadas, the glory of a Brahmin lay in his knowledge of the Supreme Being. In the Pauranic age he claimed reverence equal to that offered to the gods, by virtue of his birth alone.

The reason of Brahmin-worship.

But how are we to account for the meek submission of the people to the Brahmanical yoke? Why did they allow a class of their own community to usurp the reverence due to their gods, on the claim of birth alone, and how could such wild stories about their powers obtain credence with the laity?

The Yogis.

In explanation of these startling facts, we have to remember that the highest type of Brahmin was that of the Yogi who had renounced the world and developed the mystic powers of the soul by communion with God. These were unapproached and unapproachable. The people of

* "এই পোকা তক্ষক হউক এইক্ষন।
দংশুক আমারে বহুক ব্রাহ্মণবচন॥"
Kasidas's Mahabharata.

Hindusthan believed in the miraculous power of the Yogis and offered a reverence to them which was not less than that they gave to the gods. The next class amongst the Brahmins was that of pious saints, who were great scholars caring only for a pure and stainless life and totally indifferent to worldly considerations. Such men took no thought for the morrow, even as Jesus taught. One of these was tempted by Maharaja Krisna Chandra of Navadvipa to accept a grant from him, but the Raja received only a rebuke in return though the Brahmin was in an utterly destitute condition.

The Saints.

Besides these, there were lay Brahmins, who could not boast of any particular merit beyond that of birth. But the whole Brahmin community was imbued with the spirit of the Brahmanical ideal on which the reverence of the people for the Brahmins was mainly based. It is absurd to suppose that men who had no political power could enforce obedience without first inspiring regard through their character and high attainments. The stories invented to glorify the Brahmins beyond all measure, were due to a vague and exaggerated idea of the powers of the great Risis of old—the ancestors of the modern Brahmins. In the back-woods of Bengal one meets even now with wonderful instances of belief in the Brahmin. There are people there who will not touch food before tasting water mixed with the dust of a Brahmin's feet. Before a Brahmin, they will tell no lie nor commit any other sinful act. Blind faith sometimes raises the character of illiterate people, in a way which it is easy to undo, but difficult to replace by the spread of education.

The lay Brahmins.

The Brahmanical ideal pervaded the society.

Yet it is the Brahmanical ideal and not the Brahmin of flesh and blood that is really worshipped by Hindu society. It is love of truth, absolute trust in God, utter indifference to worldly concerns, wonderful devotion and universal charity which are still the governing principles in the ideal Brahmin's life. The indifference of a Brahmin to worldly concerns is shown in the

following story related in the Chandi Kavya by Madhavacharya of Bengal.

An example from Chandi Kavya.

Lomasa the great Brahmin, was passing through the austere duties of the religious life on the sea-coast. There, immaculate and pure, he was firm as a rock in his high pursuit and exposed like the rock to the inclemencies of the weather. He cared not though the burning rays of the tropical sun beat on his bare head and was indifferent alike to the violent rain and the howling wind that came roaring in from the surging sea. Nilamvara, a son of the God Indra, one day approached him and said, "Great sage, I want to build a hut here in order to give you a little shelter." Lomasa replied, "No need of a hut since life is transitory." Nilamvara asked the sage, "How long then will you live in this world?" Lomasa said, "My body is covered with hair as you see; the fall of each hair will take the whole cycle of an Indra's reign; when all the hair thus falls off my death will surely come." That is to say, the the sage would live for ages and ages, and yet he would not allow others to build a hut for him. 'For,' said he, 'when death was certain, sooner or later, what good could there be in coveting small comforts of life?'

The sage Lomasa.

Though couched in the form of an exaggerated Pauranic story, this supreme indifference to the world and devotion to the cause of the highest good which is everlasting, is the true Brahmanic ideal which has been the cherished dream of the whole Indian community through ages.

Gifts to a Brahmin.

According to the Sastras, it is a great act of virtue to make gifts to the Brahmins. They were prohibited from pursuing any avocation for money. Their lives were to be devoted to religious work, to study and to other disinterested pursuits, calculated to contribute to the happiness of mankind. And as the State would not take charge of them, it was enjoined as a part of the duty of everyman in society to provide for their maintenance.

I have tried to indicate the lines on which the Pauranic Renaissance attempted to build up Hindu society. The literature that grew up in this attempt at a proper exposition of the spirit of Hinduism, promulgates the creed of faith in God and in the Brahmin, which constitutes its essential features. We shall next deal in detail with those Bengali translations of Sanskrit works which first gave an impetus towards popularising the doctrines of the Pauranic religion.

The Chief characteristics of the Pauranic Literature.

Translations.

2. Vernacular recensions of Sanskrit works. General remarks.
 (a) The Ramayana.
 (b) The Mahabharata.
 (c) The Bhagavata.
 (d) The Chandi of Markandeya.

General Remarks

Bengali translations of Sanskrit works at this period did not, as a rule, follow the text too closely. They were meant for the masses. Learned people read the originals, and did not at all care to see them again in Bengali. In order more effectually to work on the impressionable mind of the common people, as also to suit their intellectual capacity, the original texts required modification in Bengali. The *Kathakatas* or recitatives with songs, which became very popular during these times, introduced stories and descriptions, not contained in the original Sanskrit writings, but much appreciated by the people, since the narrators invented them for the very purpose of making a greater impression on their audience. The translations of the period, though mainly agreeing with, not seldom deviated from, the spirit of their originals. These literary sins again were not always of commission merely, but sometimes of omission also. The higher truths and more advanced literary compositions of the Sanskrit originals were not always translated because they were not likely to be

Translations were not literal.

understood by those accustomed only to the Bengali recensions. So, inspite of fresh accretions, the translations were generally less in length than the Sanskrit texts.

Dissemination of Classical ideas.

In the declining days of Buddhism, the masses had lost all touch with Sanskrit learning. We have seen that the teeth of Queen Aduna were compared by the rustic bard to the bark of the cork plant (sola) in order to signify their whiteness. The metaphors of that period appear to the Bengal people of this age as neither refined nor edifying, in spite of their apt and homely character. With the revival of a taste for Sanskrit, the metaphorical expressions with which that language abounds were freely borrowed for the embellishment of the vernacular, and they became familiar even to the rustic people of the villages. These metaphors were often translated without any idea of appropriateness. A woman's gait would be compared, for instance, to the movements of an elephant. The beauty of the nose was indicated by the beak of an eagle. Arms that reached down to the knee-joints were held as signs of manly beauty. The graceful steps of a girl were compared to the movements of a swan, and these and numerous similes like them became quite a craze with Bengali poets.

Not always appropriate.

Whenever a woman's beauty was to be described, the reader was certain to meet with such stereotyped figures of speech, which in more modern times became extremely hackneyed and tiresome. We must remember that this country was once covered with forests, and in such ages when men lived closer to nature than they now are, the march of the elephant, slow and majestic, would attract the eyes. In a sight so familiar, they might well discover points which would remind them of the stateliness of a graceful woman. On the jungly banks of the beautiful Indian *Jhils*, the grace of a swan's movement was a frequent sight that attracted the eyes. But ages passed and the forests were cut down; the wild elephants passed out of sight, and the swan ceased to be a common object; hence those similes were no longer

thought applicable to the idea of beautiful maidenhood. But where they thus naturally failed, convention came to the rescue.

Convention keeps up the fashion.

Conventional phrases from the classics had great attractions for our poets, and with those who did not themselves possess keen eyes for the observation of nature, they commanded an overwhelming influence. I quote below a stereotyped description of beauty. However ludicrous it may appear in translation, the cadence of the rhythmical lines, added to the sweetness and sonorousness of the words, makes the description attractive in Bengali. What may strike a foreigner as somewhat grotesque, is to us excusable, or even elegant, because the similes are classical and conventionally correct, in accordance with the highest taste of a former period.

A stereotyped description of beauty.

"Her eyes reprove the bird Khanjana in their playfulness. Her eye-brows are like the bow of the God of Love, bent to aim the arrows of her side-long glances. The beak of an eagle would be no match for her beautiful nose. The crimson hue of her lips reminds one of the Vandhuli flower. Her teeth are like pearls, and her smile like a flash of lightning, which dispels the darkness. By it she sheds ambrosia all around. Her waist is slender like the lion's, and her motion slow and graceful as a swan's."

* সুন্দর কামিনী কাম বিমোহে।
খঞ্জন গঞ্জন নয়ন চাহে॥
মদন ধনুক ভুরু বিভঙ্গে।
অপাঙ্গ ইঙ্গিতে বাণ তরঙ্গে॥
নাসা খগপতি নহে সমতুল।
সুরঙ্গ অধর বাঁধুলি ফুল॥
দশন মুকুতা বিজলী হাসি।
অমিয় বরিষে আঁধার নাশি॥
হরি * * কটি নিতম্ব।
রাজ হংস জিনি গতি বিলম্ব॥ Alaol.

If classical figures occasionally overloaded vernacular poetry, the efforts of the translators, however, did immense service towards the development of our language, by gradually enriching it with a supply of choice expressions from Sanskrit. Our poor despicable *patois* rose to the dignity of a finished and mellifluous tongue, and a vast literature was brought into existence, comprising numerous translations and expositions of Sanskrit works. The influence thus exerted upon the masses produced results of inestimable value. There is now not a rustic in a Bengal village, who does not know how Ram nobly courted all misfortune and gave up the throne which by right belonged to him, because his father Dasaratha in a moment of weakness had given a pledge to Kaikeyi, his queen; how the great Bhisma took the vow of celibacy because his father King Santanu could not win Satyavati for his bride unless he promised the throne to her sons; how the King Sivi offered his own flesh in fulfilment of a promise; how Prahlada, son of Hiranyakashipu, was true to his faith, in the midst of the cruel persecutions by his father; how the sage Dadhichi, for the good of the world, died by fire, to create the Thunderbolt; how the young prince Dhruva attained final beatitude in the heart of the forest, and dwells for ever in the Polar star; how Alarka, the king of spotless fame, put out his own eyes for the sake of a vow; how Ekalavya, the great archer, cut off the thumb of his right hand at the desire of his teacher, Drona; how Janaka, the princely saint, ruled his kingdom as a true servant of God, unmoved through weal and woe; how Yudhisthira would even choose hell for the sake of others; and how Nala, King of Nisada, suffered for the sake of truth all that a human being could suffer, and yet did not

The translators enrich our language from Sanskrit.

The Pauranic stories grow familiar.

Ram.

Bhisma.

Sivi.

Prahlada.

Dadhichi.

Dhruva.

Alarka.

Ekalavya.

Janaka.

Yudhisthira.

Nala.

swerve from the righteous course. The devotion and sacrifices of woman as related in the Puranas are even greater. Half a century ago no woman in Bengal, however illiterate, was ignorant of the sufferings of the faultless Sita, her trial and her exile; of the wonderful devotion of Savitri, who followed her husband Satyavana even in death; of Damayanti and her wonderful resourcefulness in the recovery of her husband, Nala; of Chinta, the devoted wife of King Shrivatsa; of the calm courage of Queen Kausalya who could say to her son Ram on the eve of his exile, "Go thou to the forest for the cause of virtue; and may the virtue and truth, which thou hast so faithfully followed, preserve thee!" Such were the stories and traditions by which the minds and characters of the masses were formed. When we read in the Chandi Kavya by Mukundarama, of Kalketu, the illiterate huntsman, referring to texts from the Bhagvata, in his soliloquy on the banks of the Ajay; of his wife Phullara explaining to the Goddess Chandi the imprudence of visiting at strange houses, and illustrating her argument by chapter and verse from the Ramayana; or of Khullana, the beautiful wife of Dhanapati, freely quoting from the Puranas, as she talks with her co-wife Lahana, one need not be surprised at this display of learning even by people who sprang from the lower classes of Hindu society. The translations of the Puranas had by this time reached the humblest cottage in Bengal. The way in which they were made familiar to illiterate men and women is interesting. The translated works were recited to them by those amongst themselves who were able to read, but a far greater popularising of Pauranic stories was carried out by the performances of the professional singers. These people, Mangal Gayaks, as they are called, give their renderings of the ancient stories to this day during winter evenings by the roadsides and in the villages of

Sita.

Savitri.

Damayanti

Chinta.

Kausalya.

Translations reached the humblest Bengali cottage.

Professional singers, The Mangal Gayaks.

Bengal. The performers may be as many as eleven or twelve in number, of whom one, the Gayen, is the leader or soloist, while the rest act as a kind of subdued, humming chorus. The Mangal or recitation is held in some large court or in the open air. The Gayen stands in a prominent position, often wearing a crown on his head and *Nupura* or cymbals on his feet, while his chorus sits crouching in a semi-circle behind him. He begins to narrate a Pauranic story, singing the metrical verses of a vernacular translation from some Sanskrit poem. He acts as he sings, and the *Nupuras* make a jingling accompaniment to his measured and rythmical movements; even now and then his recitation is interrupted by some moral or theological digression of his own, which is often of extraordinary depth and beauty. This will end with a song, in which, at a given signal, the chorus joins, dwelling on a low droning note, and giving to the main narrative a major or minor character according to the musical interval they maintain between themselves and the solo.

The Mangal Gans give a glimpse of the ancient world.

In this quaint spectacle—which will draw hundreds or even thousands of men and women to see it, night after night, for months at a stretch,—we catch a glimpse of a world so old that even the Pauranic Renaissance itself, beside it, seems to be a thing of yesterday. The intellectual history of India ever since Sankaracharya in the end of the seventh century has been one long story of the progressive democratising of the Vedanta philosophy; and the theological and devotional profundity of these Indian Mangal Gayaks is a result of this fact, a characteristic peculiar to themselves and to their age. But in the Mangal Gan itself, we cannot doubt that we have preserved to us the mode by which, in a remotely ancient past, the ballads of Homer were handed down amidst the villagers of Greece; the mode adopted by Damayanti in one of the oldest portions of the Mahabharata, when she sent out the Gayaks to search for the lost Nala; nay, a mode not unprecedented in medieval Europe itself, when the parties of

strolling minne-singers performed simple dramas like 'Ancassin and Nicolette' in the manor hall.

There are many classes of Indian rhapsodists, but these ballad-singers are undoubtedly the oldest and most primitive. Even before the period of which we are now speaking, in the time of the Pal Kings, as we have already mentioned, Bengal was rich in such ballad-chronicles. It is perhaps from the great patronage which the Gayaks received from this particular dynasty, that a single performance of any narrative is called a *Pāla* to this day. The one-stringed lyre which was used by a ballad-singer while singing the glories of Gopi Pal, is still known as the *Gopi-yantra*, after the name of the monarch. The poets who composed the songs of the Pal Kings were, in this respect, different from the court-bards of Delhi of a later period. The Renunciation of Gopi Chand, for instance, was obviously not a subject that a man was hired and paid to sing. Its popularity and persistence were directly due to the way in which it struck the imagination of the people and was taken up by the village Mangal Gayaks. The ballads of Behula, or Manasa Mangal, have a similar source. Old systems of worship seem to fly before us, as we begin to thread the mazes of the history of the Mangal Gans. For instance, we have the worship of the Planets, probably introduced by the Scythic Brahmins in a very remote age. It is my own belief that the story of Srivatsa and Chinta, which occurs in most of the Bengali versions of the Mahabharata, and cannot be traced to any known Sanskrit original, represents an attempt, fashionable at a certain period, to popularise the worship of Saturn or Sani, through these Mangal Gans.

"Pāla."

Gopi-yantra.

A story in honour of Sani.

When we consider how much of the recitation, at any given performance, may be the rhapsodist's own composition and what portion is derivative or traditional, we are able to realise the way in which this particular form must have contributed to

the growth of the great Epics. The Mangal Gayak is accountable to none, for the source from which he draws his narrative. He may take one part of his recitative from one version of the story, and another from another, at his own sweet will. His only responsibility is to please his audience. The songs with which his religious and descriptive passages are interspersed may be his own, or traditional, or lyrics of unusual beauty that he has picked from other poets of the countryside. The chorus is in such *rapport* with him, that they will often begin the accompaniment in hushed fashion on the last words of his recitation, bursting into fuller music as he enters on the song. Sometimes, again, they will be silent until the song gives the signal.

The Gayak and his Chorus.

All this, which may seem to thoughtless observers crude and unliterary, in actual fact constitutes the great value of the Mangal Gan. The fullest room is left to individual genius, and that fame and appreciation which are the main stimulus to poets, are given in their utmost measure by the rapt audience vastly experienced in this form of composition and ready to listen, spell-bound, for hours, if necessary, to a Gayak of unusual powers. It is thus easy to see how every performance of a Mangal represents the net result of the whole past experience of the chief Gayen and his chorus, in appealing to their audiences. Each has acted and reacted on the other for many years, and a very successful form of Mangal will become more or less stereotyped, though not beyond the possibility of added refinement, and will be handed down from father to son, from teacher to disciple, from master-singer to student or apprentice, generation after generation. Supposing now some great poet to arise,—some Homer or Valmiki—these floating tales and songs and ballads will be woven by him, with his unique combination of critical and creative genius, into a strong coherent shape. Definition and form are given to this. At such a moment it may be written down, weeded of its vernacular impurities, its popular grossness

The Mangal Gan create Epic poets.

or chance vulgarities, but throbbing with the strong sympathies and dramatic instinct of the common people who gave birth to it. At this point, it appears as if the impossible had taken place. The world receives a new epic and it bears on its front a single poet's name.

It is owing to this popularization of old stories by the professional rhapsodists that there is still a possibility of epic poems being written in this country. Not only the subject, but the poetical features of a connected narrative become quite familiar to all classes of people, and when the great poet comes, he has the double advantage of finding a vast body of raw poetic material at hand, and a willing audience educated to appreciate his subtlest acts of creative fancy. The poems of Chandi Mangal, Manasa Mangal, and the like, though they certainly do not bear comparison with the great Indian Epics, have thus a truly epic quality about them. They are expressions of all the poetry of the race and hence we find them read and admired by millions—the illiterate masses forming by far the most devoted of their admirers.

New features introduced.

At every stage of our past history, these ballad-singers have risen up from amongst the masses. New features have been introduced, in accordance with the taste and fashion of the period, the nature of the changing environment. As the *Gopi-yantra* or one-stringed lyre of the old rhapsodists was supplanted in a later age by the *Behala* or violin and *Khanjan* or cymbals, of our present Mangal Gayaks, so also the crown of the Chief Gayen is perhaps a new departure.

The Hindu Renaissance adopts the Mangal Gans for popularising Pauranic stories.

It is but natural that the Hindu Renaissance should have adopted this most convenient and powerful method for popularising Pauranic stories, and we have seen that it did so, with the utmost vigour, improving the old ways, which had been natural only to rustic singers, and adding such touches of heightened poetry as were inevitably demanded by the deeper culture of the present audience. Under this head of additions

in accordance with new tastes, will fall those passages of description and devotion, which are now expected.

I have already referred to the subject-matter of these songs. The vast literature of the Pauranic stories furnished the Gayaks with inexhaustible stores of inspiration. Most of these stories are wrought by the Mangal Gayaks in high-strung pathos. The story of the Great Haris Chandra, for instance, is one of their favourite subjects. This mighty king, after having performed the Asvamedha and other sacrifices, felt that there was no monarch in the world who was as righteous as he. He was indeed one of the most truthful of men, but the vanity that he secretly indulged in the recesses of his heart was to be rooted out in order to make him a perfect man. A severe trial follows:—Visvamitra, the sage, seeks to complete and manifest Haris Chandra's passion for truth. He appears before the king and seeks gifts. Haris Chandra whose bounty is unlimited promises to give him whatever he would seek. The sage asks for his whole kingdom. The king has already pledged his word and there is no escape. He leaves the kingdom and with his Queen Saivya and the prince Rohitasva goes a-begging. But the sage will not let him alone even in this plight. He comes to the king and asks for dakshina, the religious fee which must be added to all kinds of gifts to a Brahmin. He could not, he said, accept the kingdom if a fixed sum was not paid on this head. The King finding no remedy sells his wife and son to a Brahmin; and he himself becomes the slave of a *Dom*, one of those low-born men, who serve in the funeral ground, and thus meets the demand of Visvamitra.

The story of Haris Chandra.

The King gives his kingdom.

Sells himself, his wife and son.

He is bidden by his master to watch and serve in the funeral ground during the night. It is a cloudy night and the rays of stars shine feebly over the grounds from which appears here and there the lurid light of funeral pyres that only increases the gloom of the place.

Serves in the funeral ground.

A mourner comes, carrying a young lad in her arms, and implores, in a petious tone, help for cremating the dead child. Haris Chandra at once recognises in her his beloved Queen, the dead body being of his own son, the prince Rohitasva who died of snake-bite on that very day. The interview between the royal couple in that plight becomes heart-rending; the king of the world in the guise of a *Dom* in rags, and the Queen Saivya whose beauty and character were the themes of the songs of the Magadha bards, lowly at his feet in the agonies of insupportable grief.

The pathetic meeting.

The whole story is tragic and full of tender pathos. Raja Haris Chandra suffers for the sake of truth. There is no other compulsion throughout all these trials than that which springs from within,—from a sense of duty, which with men of high character always carries the strongest force. The Gayen sings in a melodious strain and his voice trembles with tender emotion, as he describes the sufferings of the King. The pathos created by the woes of the Queen and of the Prince melt the audience to tears, and the silence that prevails over that vast congregation is only interrupted by occasional sobs—the Chief Singer's tone ringing in strains of tender wail which is heard in that assembly like the plaintive sound of a single lyre and the story becomes more real than any history.

The great effect on the audience.

In all this, I have tried to show how great an influence was exercised on the minds of the people, by the Bengali versions of the Puranas. I shall now proceed to deal with some of the popular translations themselves which have helped to educate the masses of Bengal, and also to form their character, for the last five centuries.

(a) *Translations of the Ramayana*

The translation of the Ramayana by Krittivasa is by far the most popular book in Bengal. Five hundred years have

gone by, since the date of its composition, and still nearly a hundred thousand of copies are annually sold in Bengal. I found the hill people of Tippera, who speak the Tippera dialect, purchasing copies of this work when they came down to the plains. It is in fact the Bible of the people of the Gangetic valley, and it is for the most part the peasants who read it.

Krittivasa and his great popularity.

Krittivasa has left a graphic account of his own ancestry, and of the earlier portion of his life. Owing to the omission of certain names, however, from this autobiographical notice, an important problem touching his career remains unsolved. It has not been definitely ascertained who the Emperor of Gaur was, referred to by him as his patron, by whose order he translated the Ramayana.

His autobiography.

We know for certain that he was born in February, 1346 A.D., on the 30th of the Bengali month Magh—the Sri Panchami day, when Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, is worshipped in Bengal. The goddess no doubt looked with a benign smile upon the new-comer, who heard at his birth the hymns recited by the Brahmins, and the sound of the conch-shells blown by the women. We may presume further that the goddess granted the baby the boon of immortal fame. Krittivasa gives an interesting story of his ancestors. They were Kulina Brahmins descended from Sriharsa who came to Bengal from Kanauj at the call of King Adisur in 732 A.D.* Narasinha Ojha, 17th in decent from Shriharsa, was the prime minister of King Vedanuja, whom we identify with King Danuja Madhava of Svarnagrama. Narasinha Ojha left Eastern Bengal and settled in the village Fulia in 24-Parganas probably in 1248 A.D., owing to the disturbance which followed an invasion of Suvarnagrama by Emperor Fakiruddin. Nara

Born 1346 A.D.

Ancestors of Krittivasa.

* "বেদবাণাঙ্কশকে"– 654 Saka or 732 A.D.

Sinha's son Garvesvara was known for his large-heartedness and his son Murari Ojha was by far the most distinguished scion of his illustrious family, if we are to believe the accounts given by Krittivasa. He thus says of Murari Ojha :

Murari Ojha, his grandfather.

"Murari* was a great man, and was always engaged in religious pursuits. He was known for his extreme piety and was esteemed by all. No one ever saw him moved by the vicissitudes of life or by passion. He was handsome in appearance. His scholarship in religious literature was as great as that of Markandeya or of Vyas."

Other particulars.

Murari Ojha's son Vanamali was the father of our poet. In his autobiographical sketch Krittivasa gives details about the position held by his uncles and cousins, together with a description of their personal qualifications which we omit. When Krittivasa entered his eleventh year he went to read in a *Tol* on the banks of the Bara Ganga.† There he read Sanskrit, Grammar and poetry, for many years. When he completed his education, he waited on the king of Gaur with a view to obtain some recognition of his scholarship.‡ He had composed five elegant verses in Sanskrit, praying for an interview with the king and had sent this through one of the officers of the royal guards. At about 7 o'clock in the morning, the guard came back carrying with him a golden staff. He approached Krittivasa and informed him that his prayer was

He completes education and visits the Emperor of Gaur.

* মহাপুরুষ মুরারি জগতে বাখানি,।
ধর্ম্মচর্চ্চায় রত মহান্ত যে মানী॥
মদরহিত ওঝা সুন্দর মূরতি,।
মার্কণ্ড ব্যাস সম শাস্ত্রে অবগতি॥—Krittivasa.

† The river Padma.

‡ রাজপণ্ডিত হব মনে আশা করে।
পঞ্চ শ্লোক ভেটিলাম রাজা গৌড়েশ্বরে॥
দ্বারি হস্তে শ্লোক দিয়া রাজাকে জানালাম।
রাজাজ্ঞা অপেক্ষা করি দ্বারেতে রহিলাম॥

granted and that he was ordered to lead him to the Emperor. Krittivasa followed the officer through nine successive gates, and came to the presence of the king, who sat on a throne, lion-like in his majesty. "On his right sat the minister Jagadananda and behind him was Sunanda a Brahmin. On his left was Kedar Khan. The sovereign was talking gaily with his ministers and courtiers. Amongst these was Gandharva Ray, handsome as a Gandharva, who was held in great esteem by the whole court. Three of the ministers were standing by the king who was in a humorous mood. There were also Sundar, Srivatsa and other Justices of the peace; Mukunda, the Court-Pandit, with attractive looks, and Jagadananda Ray, son of the prime minister. The Durbar of the king shone like the presence of the gods, and I was charmed with the sight. The King was in a jovial mood, many distinguished people were standing beside him. In several parts of the palace songs and dances were going on, and all the people were moving to and fro in a great hurry. A red mat was spread in the courtyard and over it there was a striped cotton sheet; a beautiful silk canopy hung overhead, and the monarch was there enjoying the sunshine of the month of Magha. I took my stand at some distance from his majesty, but he beckoned me with his hand to come nearer. A minister loudly pronounced the royal order, requiring me to approach the King, which I did in all haste. I stood at a distance of four cubits from him. I recited seven verses

The Emperor receives him kindly and asks him to translate the Ramayana.

সপ্ত ঘটি বেলা যখন দেয়ালে পড়ে কাটি।
শীঘ্র ধাই আইল দ্বারী হাতে স্বর্ণ-লাঠি॥
কার নাম কুলিয়ার মুখটি কৃত্তিবাস।
রাজার আদেশ হৈল করহ সম্ভাষ॥
নয় দেউড়ী পার হয়ে গেলাম দরবারে।
সিংহসম দেখি রাজা সিংহাসন-পরে॥
রাজার ডাহিনে আছে পাত্র জগদানন্দ।
তাহার পাছে বসিয়াছে ব্রাহ্মণ সুনন্দ॥
বামেতে কেদার খাঁ ডাহিনে নারায়ণ।
পাত্র মিত্র সহ রাজা পরিহাসে মন॥

in Sanskrit, to which he listened attentively. Five gods inspired me, and by the grace of Sarasvati, the rhyme and metre came spontaneously. Sweet were the verses and varied were their metres. The king was pleased and ordered me to be garlanded. Kedar Khan sprinkled drops of sweet-scented sandal on my head. The King presented me with a silk-robe. He asked his courtiers what gift would best become the occasion. They replied, 'Whatever Your Majesty may deem fit. The recognition of Your Majesty is the only true reward of merit.' Then they advised me to ask of the King whatever I might want. I replied, 'Nothing

গন্ধর্ব্ব রায় ব'সে আছে গন্ধর্ব্ব-অবতার।
রাজসভা পূজিত তিঁহ গৌরব অপার॥
তিন পাত্র দাঁড়াইয়া আছে রাজার পাশে।
পাত্র মিত্র লৈয়া রাজা বসে পরিহাসে॥
তাহিনে কেদার রায় বামেতে তরণী।
সুন্দর শ্রীবৎস আদি ধর্ম্মাধিকারিণী॥
মুকুন্দ রাজার পণ্ডিত প্রধান সুন্দর।
জগদানন্দ রায় মহাপাত্রের কোঙর॥
রাজার সভাখান যেন দেব-অবতার।
দেখিয়া আমার চিত্তে লাগে চমৎকার॥
পাত্রেতে বেষ্টিত রাজা আছে বড় সুখে।
অনেক লোক দাণ্ডাইয়া রাজার সম্মুখে॥
চারিদিকে নাট্য গীত সর্ব্বলোকে হাসে।
চারিদিগে ধাওয়া ধাই রাজার আওাসে॥
আঙ্গিনায় পড়িয়াছে রাঙ্গা মাজুরি।
তার উপর পড়িয়াছে নেতের পাছুড়ি॥
পাটের চাঁদোয়া শোভে মাথার উপর।
মাঘ মাসে খরা পোহায় রাজা গৌড়েশ্বর॥
দাণ্ডাইনু গিয়া আমি রাজ-বিদ্যমানে।
নিকটে যাইতে রাজা দিল হাত সানে॥
রাজ-আদেশ কৈল পাত্র ডাকে উচ্চৈঃস্বরে।
রাজার সম্মুখে আমি গেলাম সত্বরে॥
রাজার ঠাঁই দাঁড়াইলাম হাত চারি অন্তরে।
সাত শ্লোক পড়িলাম শুনে গৌড়েশ্বরে॥
পঞ্চদেব অধিষ্ঠান আমার শরীরে।
সরস্বতী প্রসাদে শ্লোক মুখ হৈতে স্ফুরে॥

* * * *

do I accept from any one. Gifts I avoid. Whatever I do, I care for glory alone. No scholar, however great, can blame my verses.'

"The King was pleased with my answer and requested me to compose the Ramayana. With this token of recognition from him I left the court. People from all parts of the capital thronged to have a sight of me, deeming me a wonderful man. They said, 'Blessed are you, O Scholar of Fulia, you are amongst the scholars what Valmiki was amongst the sages.' By the blessings of my parents and with the authority of my master, I completed seven cantos of the Ramayana."

"Blessed are you, O. Scholar of Fulia."

নানা মতে নানা শ্লোক পড়িলাম রসাল।
খুসি হৈয়া মহারাজ দিলা পুষ্পমাল॥
কেদার খাঁ শিরে ঢালে চন্দনের ছড়া।
রাজা গৌড়েশ্বর দিল পাটের পাছড়া॥
রাজা গৌড়েশ্বর বলে কিবা দিব দান।
পাত্র মিত্র বলে রাজা যা হয় বিধান॥
পঞ্চ গৌড় চাপিয়া গৌড়েশ্বর রাজা।
গৌড়েশ্বর পূজা কৈলে গুণের হয় পূজা॥
পাত্র মিত্র সবে বলে শুন দ্বিজরাজে।
যাহা ইচ্ছা হয় তাহা চাহ মহারাজে॥
কারো কিছু নাহি লই করি পরিহার।
যশ যাই তথায় গৌরব মাত্র সার॥
যত যত মহাপণ্ডিত আছয়ে সংসারে।
আমার কবিতা কেহ নিন্দিতে না পারে॥
সন্তুষ্ট হইয়া রাজা দিলেন সন্তোষ।
রামায়ণ রচিতে করিলা অনুরোধ॥
প্রসাদ পাইয়া বাড়ি হইলাম সত্বরে।
অপূর্ব্বজ্ঞানে ধরে লোক আমা দেখিবারে॥
চন্দনে ভূষিত আমি লোক আনন্দিত।
সব বলে ধন্য ধন্য ফুলিয়া-পণ্ডিত॥
মুনি মধ্যে বাখানি বাল্মীকি মহামুনি।
পণ্ডিতের মধ্যে কৃত্তিবাস গুণী॥
বাপ-মায়ের আশীর্ব্বাদে গুরু আজ্ঞা দান।
রাজাজ্ঞায় রচে গীত সপ্ত কাণ্ড গান॥

In the genealogical work Mahavamsavali by Dhruvananda Misra, written in the year 1495, we find this mention of Krittivasa: "Krittivasa, the wise poet, who is of aquiet nature, and peace, loving disposition, and very popular."

The court, referred to in the autobiographical account, was in all probability that of Kamsa Narayana of Tahirpur. Jagadananda, the minister, referred to by the poet, was a nephew of the Raja. Mukunda, the chief Pandit of the court, was probably Mukunda Bhaduri whose son Srikrisna was the prime minister, and whose grandson Jagadananda was a minister of the court. They were all Varendra Brahmins. The title Khan affixed to the name of a courtier named Kedar shows the court of this King to have been already subjected to Muhammadan influence. In a manuscript copy of the Aranyakanda of the Ramayana, we find Krittivasa lamenting over his failing health and his sufferings.

An historical review.

The Ramayana by Krittivasa, as we find it in print, is not at all the book that Krittivasa wrote. In Bengal, where the vernacular was adopted as a means of popular teaching, all good works used to be recast by those who copied them at subsequent periods. The words which grew obsolete, and forms of expressions that became unfashionable, in course of time, were changed by copyists There were also interpolations and omissions on a large scale, by reason of which after a few centuries the whole work would present a form in many points different from the original. But the general tone was as a rule preserved, and those who made changes, or otherwise added to the poem, adapted themselves more or less to its style. Krittivasa and Chaucer were nearly contemporary. But what a difference between them! The Ramayana of Krittivasa, passing through constant changes to suit the tastes of the moderns, is even now a fountain of inspiration to millions of people, whereas 'The Canterbury Tales' lies on the shelf amongst the classics, and is approached by the learned only. Historically

The interpolations and changes in the poem.

of course such a state of things does not commend itself. What the original poem of Krittivasa was like can now be only dimly guessed under the mass of later interpolations and alterations. By the efforts of the Vangiya Sahitya Parisad, a number of very old MSS. of the Ramayana have been secured with a view to the recovery of the genuine poem of Krittivasa. Their different readings, however, are a puzzle to our scholars. But when we consider the vast influence that this poem in its modernised form is still exerting, after the lapse of 500 years, on the education of the masses in Bengal, we do not really know how far we should regret the loss of the original poem, the quaint and antiquated form of which could afford only a philological interest. It must be stated here that the poetry of the original work has not suffered at all by these changes. The country people, true to their strong poetical instincts, have preserved the really beautiful and interesting passages while they simplified and modernised the style. Interpolations and changes have been made chiefly with the object of introducing into the poem leading thoughts of the succeeding ages. Vaisnava poets, particularly, have enhanced the charm of the book by adding a devotional element, which, in the present shape of the poem, forms one of its chief features.

The changes wrought in the poem have been great. We can now trace in it the interpolating hands of Vaisnavas as well as Saktas—followers of those two different cults who showed such bitter animosity towards each other for so many centuries. The work being, as I have said, the most popular in Bengal, different religious sects missed no opportunity to introduce their own various doctrines, and pass them on in the name of Krittivasa. These are like the advertisements on the cover of a shilling-novel. There could not be a better method for propagating a religious creed, and Krittivasa not only helped the circulation, but his name added weight to the doctrines themselves.

Krittivasa's Ramayana at the present day is a curious medley in which the different elements of Pauranic religion have found a place, and it does not follow Valmiki's original poem very

closely. As far as Krittivasa was concerned, he was probably faithful to Valmiki, though he abridged him. We come to this conclusion on comparing the earlier manuscripts; the older the MS., the nearer it is to Valmiki's Epic.

The story of Rama's exile which forms the main theme of the Ramayana is briefly this:—Ram is to ascend the throne by the wish of his father King Dasaratha. He is dressed gorgeously, his person decked with jewels, his rich apparel diffusing the sweet scent of sandal; he is delighted with the prospect of his coronation

The Story of Rama's exile.

the people applaud his virtues and look forward to his being crowned a king. Ram is talking gaily about his good fortune with his beautiful bride Sita, when he is suddenly called, at dawn of day, to the appartments of his royal father, old Dasaratha. He passes through the streets, which ring with the joyous shouts of men and

The coming Coronation.

women greeting him. The capital is decked with flowers and banners. The air is fragrant. Everywhere, throngs of people wait to catch sight of Ram, whose beauty of person, matchless valour, truthfulness and anxiety to help the poor and needy, have endeared him to all hearts. Ram comes into the presence of the old monarch, but there he meets with a strange spectacle; the king is shedding tears and dares not look at his dear son. Ram is awe-striken, like a traveller treading on venomous snake that lies in his path. His step-mother Kaikeyi, the favourite Queen

The banishment.

of Dasaratha, sits beside her husband in an attitude on which the firmness of a fell purpose is apparent—her features inspired with strange emotions, which do not betray any softness of heart. Ram makes his usual obeisance to both. The king weeps like a child, and hangs his head; but the queen speaks out. Taking advantage of an old vow which Dasaratha made to her, she has extorted a promise to banish Ram for fourteen years, and to place her own son, Bharata, on the throne of Ayodhya. To this, Dasaratha adds in great grief that, promise-bound as he is, he is helpless; but his

son can easily take the throne by force; and this he ought to do. The people of Uttara Kosala will give him full support in such an attempt. Ram for a moment stands silent as a statue. Only a moment ago he dreamt of an Empire. Now he feels, with the ascetics, that man's true greatness lies in the sacrifice that he makes, and that earthly magnificence cannot really give him glory. At this, he throws away his jewels and his rich apparel, dismisses the state-carriage that brought him here, waives aside the royal umbrella and with a firmness of purpose which is dignity itself, he puts on the bark of a tree, turns an ascetic, and leaves the palace. His half-brother Laksmana and the beautiful princess Sita, of whose fair face even the Sun and Moon were scarcely hitherto allowed to have a peep, follow him. This daughter of the pious and revered Janaka, the King of Mithila, can by no means be persuaded to live in the palace without her Lord; she throws away her jewels, and her tender feet, coloured with beautiful *alta*, tread the bare earth with its thorny paths, while the people of Ajodhya lament wildly, as they see the royal couple and the prince Laksmana leave the capital in such a sad plight. The old King Dasaratha is crushed to death under the heavy burden of sorrow. Bharata, son of Kaikeyi, comes to Ajodhya, and hears of the machinations of his mother only to be struck with grief. Followed by the loyal subjects of Ajodhya, he overtakes Ram in the forest; abandoning his own royal dress, he walks on foot and falls at his brother's feet begging him, with tears, to take the kingdom. But Ram will not accept this. Bharata, however, cannot be persuaded to return without Ram. Ram prevails upon him at last, giving him his sandals, which he carries on his head and places on the throne, proclaiming himself to be the regent of Ram's shoes and ruling the kingdom in that capacity. Ram goes to the Dandakaranya groves, where the lofty peaks of Chitrakuta, the beautiful lake Pampa, the silver streams of the Mandakini girdling the foot of Chitrakuta—the

Lakamana and Sita follow him.

Bharata rules as the Regent of Ram's shoes.

manifold beauties of the picturesque scenery of the Daksinatya and the ever-changing seasons allay their heart's grief, and the royal couple and the prince Laksmana pass their days, restored to peace of mind, and even to happiness. In the 14th year of exile, Sita is carried off by Ravana, the Raksasa King of Lanka, and Ram with the help of Sugriva, King of Kiskindhya, wages a dreadful war to recover his wife. In Lanka, Sita resists all the persuasions, threats and oppressions of Ravana. She is resigned in her forlorn condition but firm and resolute in her mind. Ram obtains victory over the Raksasa King and recovers Sita and returns with her to the capital after fourteen years. He ascends the throne of Ayodhya, but his subjects express their doubt about Sita's fidelity during her stay at Ravana's palace; and Ram, only to satisfy the people, banishes her, though he knows her to be faultless. For the purpose of the Asvamedha or horse-sacrifice ceremony which he holds after a time, the subjects hope that the king will marry again, as without a queen such ceremonies cannot be performed. But Ram makes a golden image of Sita, and says that he has but one wife; she has been true to him in all his sufferings and he does not, for one moment, suspect her to be faithless. He knows her to be pure as purity itself; and he has banished her only because he could not prove his own conviction to others. In the capacity of a king whose principal duty is to win the good wishes of his people, he has sacrificed all the happiness of his life and he is more miserable by doing so than the most miserable of his subjects. He performs the horse-sacrifice ceremony, sitting beside the golden image of Sita. Not long after this, she is brought by the sage Valmiki, in whose hermitage she was, to the court of Ram. There she stands, with downcast eyes like the young moon, the poet says, in its second day. The people are struck dumb at the sight of the lovely queen—that beautiful Sita who in her youth went to the forest of her own free will, out of devotion to Ram, and triumphed over the unheard-of

Sita carried off by Ravana

The victory.

Sita's exile.

persecutions of Ravana, and who now, though subjected to repeated wrongs by her husband, is, as ever, a suppliant of his grace. When the question of her trial is again raised, however, the queen calls upon her mother, the Earth, to open and take her to herself. Verily she has been her true daughter, ever since she was found by Janaka, the King, in the furrow of a field, and she is a patient sufferer of wrongs even as the Earth herself. A cavity opens, at these words, and the Earth in the guise of a stately woman appears from within. Sita throws herself into her arms, and, with her last looks fixed on Ram, enters in, and disappears.

Sita vanishes away in the arms of her mother the Earth.

This is in brief the story of the Ramayana. It is full of tender and pathetic interest. Its tales of righteousness, of life-long devotion, of holy adherence to one's vows and consequent sufferings have an ennobling influence on the people at large, and they are never weary of hearing them recited.

The ennobling influence of this and other Pauranic stories.

One point need be mentioned here. The stories of the Puranas never involve their readers in a merely tragic interest. The sufferings that raise a man's character—martyrdoms for the sake of virtue, are the subjects which they take up. The poem attracts the reader by its literary excellence, by some romantic motive appealing to the ordinary mind; but, in addition, there is a great purpose to be traced in this Pauranic literature, underlying and hallowing the realistic scenes. This purpose is not made inartistically prominent, but it works half-revealed as the great moral Law that runs through the affairs of men in this world. In India religion is not dissociated from any department of thought; in poetry, in philosophy and even in logic, the chief point, the Indian writers have in view, is spirituality, which to their eyes is the finer essence of life and without which life sinks into grossness. Their earthly habitations are meant as temporary residences which always have lattices and apertures open towards heaven.

Details of the changes which have been made by later poets in the original work of Krittivasa will be dealt with in the chapter on Vaisnavism.

The great popularity of Krittivasa cannot but strike any one who visits Bengal. Through the cocoanut and mango groves which half conceal the thatched roofs of the villages, let one pass by the narrow muddy road, in the stillness of the night, when nature, as it were, drowses, with the drooping leaves of the trees and the waning light in the cottages, and he will mark here and there some small merchant or craftsman, sitting beside his lamp and poring over the pages of the Ramayana, which he chants, as he reads, in a sing-song voice, that chimes in, with the droning of the beetles and the sound of the falling leaves.

The great popularity of Krittivasa's Ramayana.

Numerous writers after Krittivasa translated the Ramayana into Bengali, but none of them could ever rival his popularity or throw his great work into the shade, though some of the subsequent translations display a highly finished style of composition. The reasons which have determined this preference for Krittivasa are two-fold. (1) Krittivasa, of all the translators of the Ramayana, has made the nearest approach to reproducing that pathos which is admittedly the strength of Valmiki's great epic. (2) The unmatched simplicity of Krittivasa's translation commends it to the masses more than any other literary quality. This simplicity of the Bengali recension is also on the lines of Valmiki.

Other translations of the Ramayana.

Of the other translators of the Ramayana, we must first name Sasthivara Sen who was born at Jhinardwip, the modern Jhinerdi in Vikrampur in the district of Dacca. He belonged to the Vaidya or physician caste and lived more than three hundred years ago. Sasthivara and his son Gangadas were voluminous writers. The son completed what the father had left unfinished. They translated not only the Ramayana, but also the Mahabharata, and wrote poems besides in honour of Manasa Devi,

Sasthivara and Gangadas.

Sasthivara is precise and short. Gangadas is rather elaborate and more poetic in his descriptions. Here are a few ilnes from Gangadas. Sita prays to be taken to the bosom of her mother, Earth, when her sufferings grow unbearable.

Sita's last prayer.

* "Tear-drops finer than pearls fell from her eyes as she addressed Ram, her husband, in a tone that trembled with great grief. 'You are the Lord of the world and the help of the helpless, O King! You know best whether I have been true or not. I am the daughter of Earth and I am your wife. God created me for the personification of sorrow. You desire to place me under public trial, as many times as you please, before the people, even as one might do to a harlot. Such an insult as this trial my heart will no longer bear. Sita bids you a life-long farewell, and begs permission at your feet to depart for ever. None in this world could I count upon as my refuge, excepting you. May you, Oh lord, be my husband in all my future births!' Saying this, Sita in deep distress, began to cry, 'O mother, mother! you can bear, O mother, the burden of all mortal things, but not the sorrow of your own daughter!'"

* মুক্তা জিনি বিন্দু বিন্দু চক্ষে পড়ে পানি।
রামে সম্বোধিয়া বলে গদগদ বাণী॥
সংসারের সার তুমি অগতির গতি।
আপনি জান যে আমি সতী কি অসতী।
পৃথিবী-নন্দিনী আমি তোমার ঘরণী।
বিধাতা সৃজিল মোরে করে অলক্ষিণী।
বারংবার আনি আমা দোষ পুনি পুনি॥
নগরে চত্বরে যেন কুলটা রমণী।
অপমান মহাদুঃখ না সহ পরাণে।
মেলানি মাগিল সীতা তোমার চরণে॥
তবে তুমি পরে আর নাহি মোর গতি।
জন্মে জন্মে স্বামী হও তুমি রঘুপতি॥
এই বলিয়া সীতা ঘন ঘন ডাকে
সাগর অঙ্গম ভার সহিবারে পার।
আমার ভার মা কেন সহিতে না পার॥

If this had been a translation from the original, I would not have cared to quote it. But all who know the Sanskrit epic will attest the imperious tone of the brief expressions that fell from Sita in the moment of deserting the world. In the extract quoted above, on the other hand, she speaks like a simple Bengali woman and though we may miss here the lofty reticence and composure of the original, yet one cannot fail to admire the great insight and refinement with which Gangadas has portrayed Sita's mingling of pride and sweetness.

Dvija Durgaram

The date of the composition of Dvija Durgaram's translation of the Ramayana is unknown; but this author flourished after Krittivasa of whose poem he speaks with great respect in the preface.

Jagat Ram, 1655 A.D.

Jagat Ram, the next great translator of the Ramayana, was born in the village Bhului, three miles to the south-west of Raniganj, a station on the East Indian Railway. Close to this village on the south are the Vehari Nath Hills. On the west rise the historic ranges of Panchakota. On the north flows the strong, though narrow, current of the Damodara like a silver line through sandy banks. The scenery of the village is beautiful and the place is "a meet nurse for the poetic child." Jagat Ram was a gifted poet. He was set to the task of translating the Ramayana by Raghunath Sinha Bhup, Raja of Panchakota, and completed the work in 1655 A.D. He also began to write another book called Durga Pancharatri which he did not live to complete. The last cantos of this were written by his son Ram Prasad Ray in 1680 A. D. Jagat Ram's Ramayana has a racy and sparkling style and was at one time much appreciated.

Ram Prasad, 1680 A. D.

Siva Charan

Next comes Sarada Mangala by Siva Charan Sen, a Vaidya, born in the village of Kathadia in Vikrampur in the district of Dacca. This recension of the Ramayana was composed in the latter part of the 18th century.

This author's real name was Nityananda and Adbhutacharya was his title. He began the work of translation when he was yet a boy and brought his work to completion in 1742 A. D.

Adbhutacharya, 1742 A.D.

Kavichandra was the title, Sankara being the name of the poet. Many chapters and passages from this Ramayana have been added to that of Krittivasa, and in the shape in which we find the latter poem now, it owes largely to these additions. The well-known humorous canto of Angada Raybar or Interview between Angada, as ambassador, and Ravana, which is now inseparable from Krittivasa's Ramayana, was written by Sankara Kavichandra. Besides this translation of the Ramayana, he wrote many other poems, all of which are characterised by a lively poetical spirit. Kavichandra was one of the most voluminous of old Bengali writers.*

Kavichandra's Ramayana.

* I have found 46 poems in all by this author. Kavichandra translated the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata into Bengali. The 46 poems, enumerated below, fall under one or the other of these three groups. I mention in the list the dates, where available, on which the MSS. that I found were copied.

(1) Akrura Agamana, 1683 A.D.
(2) Ajamiler Upakhyan, 1680 A.D.
(3) Arjuner Darpa Churna, 1847 A.D.
(4) Arjuner Band-bandha Pala, 1691 A.D.
(5) Unchhavritti Pala, 1654 A.D.
(6) Uddhaba Samvad, 1654, A.D.
(7) Ekadasibrata Pala, 1680 A.D.
(8) Kangsabadha.
(9) Kanvamunir Paran, 1813 A.D.
(10) Kapila Mangal.
(11) Kuntir Siva Puja, 1672 A.D.
(12) Krisner Svargarohana, 1678 A.D.
(13) Kokilasamvad, 1859 A.D.
(14) Geru Churi, 1873 A.D.
(15) Chitra Ketur Upakhyan.
(16) Dasam Purana.
(17) Data Karna, 1655 A.D.
(18) Diva Rasa.
(19) Draupadir Vastra Harana, 1702 A.D.
(20) Draupadir Svayamvara.

He was born in Panna, a village near Logo in the district of Bankura. Babu Makhan Lal Banerjee, a descendant of Sankara through one of his daughters, has, at great pains, collected a complete manuscript of Sankara's works which, however, he is not able to publish for want of funds. Kavichandra lived about the end of the 16th century.

Laksman Bandyopadhyaya.

The Ramayana by Laksman Bandyopadhyaya, was composed in the middle of the 17th century.

Balaram Bandyopadhyaya, 1838 A.D.

The Ramayana, by Balaram Bandyopadhyaya, was written in comparatively modern times. It was completed in 1838 A.D. Balaram Bandyopadhyaya was born in the village of Meteri in the district of Nadia; he dedicated his works to Madhava, his household God.

(21) Dhruva Charitra.
(22) Nanda Viday, 1758 A.D.
(23) Parikshiter Bramha Sapa.
(24) Pariyata Harana.
(25) Prahlada Charitra, 1664 A.D.
(26) Bharata Upakhyana, 1673 A.D.
(27) Vana Parva, 1678 A.D.
(28) Udyoga Parva.
(29) Bhisma Parva.
(30) Karna Parva.
(31) Salya Parva, 1673 A.D.
(32) Gada Parva.
(33) Radhika Mangal, 1660 A.D.
(34) Lanka Kanda.
(35) Ravanabadha, 1839.
(36) Rukmini Harana.
(37) Sivaratrer Yuddha.
(38) Sivi Upakhyan.
(39) Sita Haran.
(40) Haris Chandrer Pala, 1796 A.D.
(41) Adhyatma Ramayana, 1743 A.D.
(42) Angad Raybar.
(43) Kumbha Karner Raybar.
(44) Draupadir Lajjanivarana.
(45) Durvasar Paran.
(46) Laksmaner Sakti Sela.

Besides these Kavichandra wrote a voluminous work in honour of Siva.

Ram's character loses human interest.

In the original poem of Valmiki, Ram chiefly figures as a great man only. In Adikanda and Uttara-kanda,—the first canto and the last – which, according to scholars, did not form part of the original poem, there are incidents that prove him to be an incarnation of Visnu. In the other five *kandas* or cantos, however, which we believe to be the genuine epic of Valmiki, he mainly appears to us as a great man guided by the noblest of impulses, and this high character requires no help of a mythological kind to commend him to the reverence of the people. The Hindu mind, however, has undergone a change since the original epic was composed. Ram has now become, in the eyes of the people, an incarnation of Visnu and his name for millions is a synonym for God. To a writer who believes in the divinity of Ram with all his heart, the epic is no longer a mere poem, every word of it is divine. The Bengali recensions of the Ramayana, as also the Hindi Ramayana by Tulsi Das, differ in this point from the original Sanskrit epic. Whenever the vernacular poets attempt to describe any episode of Ram's life, the expressions they use, in the excess of their devotional fervour, verge on the phraseology of sermons and prayers, and we miss in them the vigorous realistic descriptions of the original. Here is an account of the rainy season by Ram Mohan who lived in the last part of the eighteenth century. The poet labours under an overwhelming idea of Ram's divinity, and cannot forget this even while giving an account of natural scenery at a particular season.

Ram Mohan.

A description of the rains.

* "In the month of Asadha the newly formed clouds appear in the sky, and I find the beautiful dark blue complexion of Ram, mirrored in them. It thunders continually. The sound falls upon my ear like the twanging of Ram's bow-string. The lightning flashes

* আষাঢ়ে নবীন মেঘ দিল দরশন।
যেমত সুন্দর শ্যাম রামের বরণ॥
ঘন ঘন গর্জ্জে ঘন অতি অসম্ভব।
যেমন রামের ধনু টঙ্কারের রব॥

at intervals. Even so flashes the figure of Ram in the mind of a devotee. At the sight of the new-born clouds, the peacocks dance for joy. So are goodly men overjoyed at the sight of Ram. Rain pours incessantly on the earth. How like the tears that Ram shed, in his grief for Sita! Thus lotus blooms in the lake, as shines the image of Ram in the minds of his devotees. The bees suck honey never leaving the lotus. Even so do the minds of the spiritual cling to the feet of Ram Chandra. The thirst of the bird Chataka is allayed by the rain as it falls. So are the passions of the flesh soothed by the presence of Ram. The rivers and streams run swiftly to lose themselves in the ocean, as the univeree moves onward to lose itself in Ram. The rain-drops soothe the heart of the earth, as the weary and the heavy-laden are soothed by Ram's name."

In spite of its ingenuity which might have made it artificial, this poem is full of simple faith. But, however this be, there is nothing to be found in the original Sanskrit poem of Valmiki which would give any opportunity to the poet for indulging in such fancies.

রয়ে-স্থয়ে সৌদামিনী চমকে গগনে।
যেমন রামের রূপ সাধকের মনে॥
ময়ূর করয়ে নৃত্য সব নবমেঘ দেখি।
রাম দেখি সজ্জন যেমন হয় সুখী॥
সদা জলধারা পড়ে ধরণী-উপরে।
সীতা লাগি যেমত রামের চক্ষু ঝোরে॥
সরসিজ-শোভাকর হৈল সরোবরে।
যেমত শোভিত রাম সেবক-অন্তরে॥
মধু-আশে পদ্মে অলি বাস করে মোদে।
যেমত মুনির মন রাঘবের পদে॥
জলপানে চাতকের তৃষ্ণা দূরে যায়।
রাম পেলে যেমত বাসনা ক্ষয় পায়॥
পুলকিত হয়ে মেঘ ডাকে ঘন ঘন।
যেমত রামেরে ডাকে নাম-পরায়ণ॥
নদনদী অতি বেগে সমুদ্রে মিশায়।
যেমত রামের অঙ্গে জীব লয় পায়॥
অবিরত বৃষ্টিতে পৃথ্বীর তাপ যায়।
যেমত তাপিত রাম-নামেতে জুড়ায়॥

Raghunandan Goswami.

Of all the translations of the Ramayana which followed Krittivasa's work, that by Raghunandan Goswami is decidedly the best. This has been published by the Battala publishing firms in Calcutta. It commands a good sale. The author was a learned man, and his writings display faultless rhyme, and a great command over language. It is a work which attracts more by the richness of its rhythmical expression, its finished style of composition, and its variety of metre than by pathos or power of delineating character and feelings. It is based not only on the Ramayana of Valmiki but also on the Hindi recension by Tulsi Das, and on some of the Puranas in which the story of Ramchandra is re-told.

The author was born in the village Mar in the district of Burdwan and completed the Rama-Rasayana, as his poem is called, in the middle of the 18th century. He belonged to the illustrious family of Nityananda; and his father's name was Kisorimohan Goswami. He dedicated the book to Radha-Madhava, the tutelary deity of his family.

It is difficult to show in translation the rhythm and the elegance of metre of a particular language, and these are the *forte* of Raghunandana's writings. He pleases the ear more often than he touches the heart. I shall make an attempt to translate a short passage from the Rama-Rasayana, below.

" Now Ram made himself ready for the battle with a gladsome heart. With the tender bark of a tree he girded himself tightly. His thick matted hair he circled about his head. Hard armour he wore that fitted him close."

" এথা রঘুবর, করিতে সমর,
সুখেতে মগন হইয়া।
অতি সুকোমল, তরুণ বাকল,
পরিলা কটিতে আঁটিয়া।
শিরে অবিকল, জটার পটল,
বাঁধিলা বেড়িয়া বেড়িয়া।
পরিলা বিকট, কঠিন কবচ,
শরীরে সুদৃঢ় করিয়া।

We feel that in the translation, the rich has become poor. When a very ordinary idea is made to sparkle by mere wealth of expression, it loses all its beauty, as soon as it is stripped of that particular garb; and Raghunandan will be a poet only to those who know Sanskrit well, or speak a Sanskritic language.

Ramgovinda Das.

The Ramayana by Ramgovinda Das consists of 25,000 slokas or verses and is, therefore, voluminous in size. The author's grandfather's name is Kunjavihari Das and his father's name Sivaram Das. The date of the composition of this poem is not known.

In my researches amongst the Bengali villages, and from other sources was derived, in addition, a large number of translations of particular episodes or portions of the Ramayana. Again there are many other poems which treat of the story incidentally. Of these we name some below :—

(1) Sri Dharma Itihasa by Gunaraj Khan.
(2) Kausalya Chaushika by Ramjivan Rudra.
(3) Sitar Vanavasa by one who subscribes himself as a son of Guna Chandra.
(4) Labkuser Yuddha by Lokanath Sen.
(5) Parijata-harana by Bhavani Nath.
(6) Rayvara by Dvija Tulsi Das.
(7) Ramer Svargarohana by Bhavanichandra.
(8) Laksmana Digvijaya by Bhavani Das.
(9) Ramayana by Dvija Dayarama.
(10) A story of the Ramayana by K..siram.
(11) Jagat Ballabha's Ramayana.
(12) Bhusandi Ramayana by Raja Prithvi Chandra of Pakur.
(13) Lanka Kanda by Fakir Ram (MS. copied in 1902 A.D.).
(14) Aranya Kanda by Vikan Sukla Das.
(15) Kalnemir Rayvara by Kasi Nath.

The above works, on the subject of the Ramayana, were written between the 14th and the 18th centuries.

(6) Translations of the Mahabharata

The Mahabharata, an epitome of Indian thought.

The story of the Mahabharata is not so compact as that of the Ramayana. It is by no means, however, the less popular of the two. The Mahabharata is an encyclopedic collection—an epitome of Indian thought and civilisation, the successive stages of which are, as it were, mirrored in it. There is a Bengali adage which says, "what is not found in the Bharata (the Mahabharata) is not in Bharata (India)." Round about the main plot—the great war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas,—there is a wild growth of wonder-tales in which the current literature and traditions of ancient India are undoubtedly entangled. From the din of warfare to the quiet and contemplative philosophy of the Gita, the reader is carried without an apology; and descriptions of heroic exploits and unmatched chivalry are interspersed with accounts of austerities and penances undergone for the sake of religion and with mythological accounts of gods. To add a chapter to such a work is the easiest thing that one can do. One has simply to put a query in the mouth of Janmejaya and that never-wearied narrator, the sage Vaisampayana, is sure to relate whatever may be asked him in earth or heaven. The poem is like the fabled *Sari* of Draupadi which may be dragged out indefinitely to any length. In the Bengali versions, the poets lost no opportunity to introduce new stories and incidents from comparatively modern life. The pathetic tale of Srivatsa and Chinta is their addition; and it is not the only one which they have added to the epic in its Bengali garb.

The contents. The main story.

We need not proceed with the tale of the Mahabharata at any length. The main story is not the whole pre-occupation of the poem. The Gita in the Udyoga Parva, together with the moral and the spiritual discourses of Bhisma in the Santi Parva, yields to no episode of the main plot, in the interest which they evoke in the mind of the readers.

The story of Nala and Damayanti, of Sakuntala, of Sarmistha and hundreds of such engrafted pieces, which are now inseparable from the main poem, have little bearing on the incidents of the Great War. An account of the Kauravas and the Pandavas only would convey a very inadequate idea of the contents of the epic. Briefly speaking, the story is as follows:—The princes of the lines of Kuru and of Pandu were born and brought up under circumstances which led to feelings of animosity on either side, ultimately bursting into the most sanguinary warfare on the fields of Kuruksetra. The five brothers, Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva, tried by all possible means to avert the war. They were the rightful heirs to half the kingdom; but Duryodhana and his brothers would not part with this. Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava, asked of King Duryodhana a grant of five villages only, so that the five brothers might have some refuge in the world. Even this Duryodhana refused to give, saying, "Not half the earth that may be covered by the point of a needle will I give without war." Added to this were the great wrongs committed against the Pandavas by Duryodhana from boyhood upwards,—the conspiracies to assassinate them, from each of which they had a narrow escape, and the last act, surpassing all the rest,—the atrocious insult upon Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas. A war was inevitable and the Ksatriya Princes of India rallied on either side when it actually broke out. The Pandavas with the help of Krisna gained the victory, though nearly the whole race of Ksatriyas was extirpated in a terrible battle that raged for eighteen successive days incessantly on the plains of Kuruksetra. Yudhisthira was afterwards smitten with remorse for having waged a cruel war which had resulted in the death of his relations and friends. This grief was accentuated by the news of the death of Krisna—the incarnatian of Visnu and the great friend of the Pandavas. Yudhisthira, with his brothers and Draupadi, made the great pilgrimage up the snowy ranges of Himalaya to Mount Meru. On the way each of the brothers dropped dead; and Yudhisthira alone was left for the crowning

scene of the Mahabharata, his ascent into heaven in mortal form.

Sanjaya's recension.

The earliest Bengali recension of the Mahabharata that we have come across is by a Brahmin poet, named Sanjaya who belonged to the illustrious family of Bharadvaja whom Adisura of Gauda had brought to Bengal. The task of translating the eighteen *Parvas* of Vyasa's Mahabharata was immense and Sanjaya justly claims the credit due to the pioneer in this field. He frequently refers to his work in the following strain in his *Bhanita*.

* "The Mahabharata, which was like an ocean of impenetrable darkness, is now unveiled to sight (made accessible to the masses) having been rendered into Bengali verses (*Panchali*) by Sanjaya."

The honour due to the pioneer.

Yet Sanjaya's work is one of the shortest epitomes of the Mahabharata that we know of; it is characterised by simplicity of style, and does not even possess any uncommon poetic merit. The manuscripts of Sanjaya's Mahabharata have been recovered from all parts of Eastern Bengal. The great popularity, it once commanded, is explicable only by reason of its being the earliest Bengali recension. Generally speaking, manuscripts of Sanjaya's Mahabharata are very voluminous, as chapters written by subsequent poets have been added to them at different times. The Adiparva by Rajendra Das, the Dronaparva by Gopi Nath Datta and numerous compositions by other writers are now inseparable factors in many of such manuscripts; and these two poets at least excel Sanjaya in the wealth of their descriptions and in the beauty and elegance of their style. Sanjaya's antiquated forms of expression give him no advantage in contrast with Rajendra Das's racy and poetic lines; yet the whole manuscript, about two-thirds of which belongs to other writers, is popularly known as the Mahabharata of Sanjaya.

* অতি অন্ধকার যে মহাভারত সাগর।
পাঁচালী সঞ্জয় তাহা করিল উজ্জ্বল॥ Sanjaya.

This writer evidently then enjoys precedence because he was the first in point of time. Sanjaya takes care in his *Bhanita* that his name may not be confounded with that of the great Sanjaya, gifted with clairvoyance, who relates the incidents of the war to the blind monarch Dhritarastra in the Mahabharata itself, and frequently emphasises the point of his authorship of the work as distinguished from their recitations by Sanjaya. We, however, know very little of his life,—the autobiographical account which was undoubtedly appended to the work as we find in every old Bengali book, has not yet been recovered; and we are in utter darkness about Sanjaya. From the early date of some of the manuscript-copies of his works that we have been able to secure, we are inclined to believe that he lived at about the time of Krittivasa and was probably his contemporary.

Sanjaya, probably a contemporary of Krittivasa.

Though some of the later poets excel Sanjaya in the elegance of expression, the earlier poet frequently displays a highly forcible style. Sanjaya particularly excels in describing martial feats. Here is a passage shewing his vigorous and animated style :—

* " In order to excite the anger of Karna, Salya says, ' If you are once hit by Arjuna's arrow you will cease to boast in such a way. There is no friend, O Karna, to advise you rightly. When a fly willingly rushes into a flame, none can save it. A child in the arms of its mother stretches its arms out to catch the moon; your aspiration is like that of the child; you want to drag Arjuna

* কোপ বাড়িবার শল্য বলে আর বার।
ছুটিলে অর্জ্জুন বাণ না গর্জ্জিবে আর॥
সুহৃদ নাহিক কর্ণ তোমা কেহ দেখে।
অগ্নিতে পতঙ্গ মরে তারে কেবা রাখে॥
অজ্ঞান মায়ের কোলে আকিতে ছাওয়ালে।
চন্দ্র ধরিবার হাত বাড়াএ কুতুহলে॥
সেই মতে কর্ণ তুমি বোলয়ে দারুণ।
রথ হৈতে পাড়িবারে চাহসি অর্জ্জুন॥
চৌকী ধার ত্রিশূলেতে যম কেন পাও।
হরিণের ছা'য়ে যেন সিংহেরে বোলাও॥

down from his chariot. Like a mad man you attempt to scratch your own body with a sharp spear. Like a fawn challenging a lion, you call Arjuna to fight with you. You are like a jackal swollen (with pride) by eating a corpse, and challenging the majesty of a lion. Oh son of charioteer, how foolish it is for you to challenge the son of a king to fight with you! You are like a gnat defying the elephant. The venomous snake whose bite is deadly, while unharmed lies coiled up in a hole and you are teasing it with a stick. Like a snake going out to fight the bird Garuda (which lives upon snakes) you aspire to fight Arjuna. The moon appears on the furthest limits of the sea, you want to cross the sea without a boat and catch the moon. A frog mimics the thunder. I set the same estimate upon all your fretting."

Mahabharata translated at Nasarat Shah's order.

The next Mahabharata, to which we have already alluded, was written at the order of Nasarat Shah. This translation is referred to in the Mahabharata of Kavindra Parameśvara in the following couplet.

"Nasarat Khan, blessed with all good qualities, had a translation of the Mahabharata compiled in Bengali verses

মৃত মাংস খাইয়া শৃগাল বড় ফুল।
সিংহেরে ডাকএ সেই হইতে নির্ম্মূল॥
সূতপুত্র হৈয়া রাজপুত্রে ডাক কেন।
মশা হৈয়া মত্ত হস্তী ডাক যুদ্ধে যেন॥
গর্ত্তের কাল সাপ ঝোকাও কাটি দিয়া।
সিংহকে ডাকহ তুমি শৃগাল হইয়া॥
সর্প যেন খাইয়া ব্যাঙ মারিতে গরুড়ক।
সেই মত চাহ তুমি মারিতে অর্জ্জুনক॥
চন্দ্র উদয় যেন সাগর অন্তর।
বিনি নৌকায় পার হ'তে চাহসি বর্ব্বর।
সেই মত কর্ণ তোমার বুঝিল যে মন।
মেঘ মধ্যে শুনি যেন ভেকের গর্জ্জন॥

(*Panchali*)."* We have not yet been able to recover this Mahabharata.

Reference has also been made in the first chapter to the next two Mahabharatas, one of which was written by Kavindra Paramesvara and the other by Srikarana Nandi. Kavindra Paramesvara began his poem with the following preliminary account :—

Kavindra Paramesvara and Srikarana.

† "The Emperor Husen Shah was a high-minded monarch, praised by all throughout the Five Gaudas (Pancha-Gauda). He was expert in the use of arms, and was like a second Krisna in the Kaliyuga. Laskara Paragal, a commander of the army of Husen Shah, the Emperor of Gauda, was a generous-minded noble man. He obtained royal presents in the shape of a golden dress, and horses of the speed of the winds : and he was further endowed with a grant of an extensive estate in Chittagong where the high-minded Khan settled. He enjoyed his territories with his sons and grandsons."

At the command of Paragal Khan Kavindra Paramesvara undertook to translate the Mahabharata. This Mahabharata which comes down to the Stri Parva, contains 17,000 Slokas or

* —"নসরত খান।
রচাইল পঞ্চালী যে গুণের নিদান॥"
Kavindra Paramesvara.

† নৃপতি হুসেন সাহ হয় মহামতি।
পঞ্চম গৌড়েতে যার পরম সুখ্যাতি॥
অল্প শত্রে সুপণ্ডিত মহিমা অপার।
কলিকালে হবু যেন কৃষ্ণ অবতার॥
নৃপতি হুসেন সাহ গৌড়ের ঈশ্বর।
তান হবু সেনাপতি হওন্ত লস্কর॥
লস্কর পরাগল খান মহামতি।
সুবর্ণ বসন পাইল অশ্ব বায়ুগতি॥
লস্করী বিষয় পাই আইবন্ত চলিয়া।
চাটিগ্রামে চলি গেল হরষিত হৈয়া॥
পুত্র পৌত্রে রাজ্য করে খান মহামতি।
পুরাণ শুনন্ত নিতি হরষিত মতি॥ Kavindra.

verses. It was composed during Husen Shah's reign (1494-1525 A.D.). Close to the sub-division of Feni in the district of Noakhali lies Paragalpur, founded by Husen Shah's great general who had conquered Chittagong and had obtained a grant of the neighbouring provinces as a reward for his valour. There is a tomb in the village, raised in honour of Rasti Khan (father of Paragal) whose name we also find mentioned in this Mahabharata. Paragal Khan's son was the valorous prince Chhuti Khan. In Paragalpur, tanks dug by the orders of the illustrious father and the son, still exist and are called after them, পরাগল খাঁর দীঘি and ছুটি খাঁর দীঘি respectively. Kavindra Paramesvara, as I have said, translated the Mahabharata down to the Stri Parva. Paragal Khan had in the mean time died and his son Chhuti Khan succeeded him. He followed in the foot-steps of his noble father and appointed a poet named Srikarana Nandi to translate the Asvamedha Parva. We find the following historical account in the introductory chapter of his book.

Paragal Khan.

Chhuti Khan appoints Srikarana Nandi.

* " The father of Nasarat Shah (Husen Shah) was a great king. He ruled the kingdom like a second Ram. Husen Shah, the great monarch, ruled the earth by *Sama* (preserving of peace), *Dana* (offering of gifts), *Danda* (punishment) and by *Bheda*

* নসরতসাহতাত অতি মহারাজা।
রামবৎ নিত্য পালে সব প্রজা॥
নৃপতি হুসেন সাহ হএ ক্ষিতিপতি।
সামদানদণ্ডভেদে পালে বসুমতী॥
তান এক সেনাপতি লস্কর ছুটি খান।
ত্রিপুরার উত্তরে করিল সন্নিধান॥
চাটিগ্রাম নগরের নিকট উত্তরে।
চন্দ্রশেখর পর্ব্বত কন্দরে॥
চার লোল গিরি তার পৈত্রিক বসতি।
বিধিএ নির্ম্মিল তাঁক কি কহিব অতি॥
চারি বর্ণ বসে লোক সেনা সন্নিহিত।
নানা গুণে প্রজা সব বসয়ে তথাত।

(bringing about division amongst his enemies). Laskar Chhuti Khan was one of his generals. He settled near Tipperah on the north of Chittagong,—in the valley of the Chandra Sekhara hills. The abode of his father had been in the Charlol Hills. The town is so beautiful that only a god could have built it. People of four castes and various races live there. The place is almost surrounded on all sides by the River Fani (modern Feni, lit. a snake). On the East are seen vast mountainous ranges without a limit. Chhuti Khan, the son of Paragal Khan, is dauntless in battle. His manly arms reach to his knee-joints. His eyes are like full-blown lotuses. He moves majestically like the elephant. Sixty-four qualities dwell in him and God has granted him world-wide renown. In magnanimity of soul and in his charity he matches Bali and Karna. In his great war-like qualities and in the dignity of his mien, however, there is none with whom he may be compared. On a report of his excellent qualities reaching the Emperor (Husen Shah) he was called to his court. He received great honour from the Emperor and obtained those rewards to which only the distinguished generals of the court are entitled. Chhuti Khan began to rule his kingdom by *Sama*, *Dana*, *Danda* and *Bheda*. The King of Tipperah left his country

ফণী নামে নদীএ বেষ্টিত চারি ধার।
পূর্ব্ব দিগে মহাগিরি পার নাহি তার॥
লস্কর পরাগল খানের তনয়।
সমরে নির্ভয় ছুটি খান মহাশয়॥
আজানুলম্বিত বাহু কমল লোচন।
বিলাসহৃদয়ে মত্তগজেন্দ্র-গমন॥
চতুঃষষ্টি কলা বসতি গুণের নিধি।
পৃথিবী বিখ্যাত সে যে নির্ম্মাইল বিধি॥
দাতা বলি কর্ণ সম অপার মহিমা।
শৌর্য্যে বীর্য্যে গাম্ভীর্য্যে নাহিক উপমা॥
তাঁহার যতেক গুণ শুনিয়া নৃপতি।
সম্বাদিয়া আনিলেক কুতূহলমতি॥
নৃপতি অগ্রেত তার বহুলসম্মান।
ঘোটক প্রসাদ পাইল ছুটি খান॥

being afraid of Chhuti Khan. He took refuge in the mountain (of Udaypur). He further sent elephants and horses as tribute to Chhuti Khan and built his palace in the midst of a dense forest. Chhuti Khan has not yet done anything to inspire fear in him. Yet he lives in constant alarm. Chhuti Khan gave friendly assurance to the King of Tipperah and he dwells happily in his own capital. The Khan's royal glory is increasing every day and he looks upon the people of the country as his children.

"One day while Chhuti Khan was seated in his court in the company of scholars and friends, he seemed to be much delighted on hearing the story of the sacred Mahabharata. He heard the Asvamedha Parva, written by the great sage Jaimini, and expressed a wish to his courtiers that the book might be translated into the vernacular dialect. If any courtier of his would undertake and complete the task, it would add lustre

লস্কর বিষয় পাইয়া মহামতি।
সামদানদণ্ডভেদে পালে বসুমতী॥
ত্রিপুর নৃপতি যার ডরে এড়ে দেশ।
পর্ব্বত গহ্বরে গিয়া করিল প্রবেশ॥
গজবাজিকর দিয়া করিল সম্মান।
মহাবন মধ্যে তাঁর পুরীর নির্ম্মাণ॥
অদ্যাপি ভয় না দিল মহামতি।
তথাপি আতঙ্কে বৈসে ত্রিপুর নৃপতি॥
আপনে নৃপতি সম্ভাষিয়া বিশেষে।
সুখে বসে লস্কর আপনার দেশে॥
দিনে দিনে বাড়ে তার রাজ সম্মান।
যাবৎ পৃথিবী থাকে সন্ততি তাহান॥
পণ্ডিতে পণ্ডিতে সভাখণ্ড মহামতি।
একদিন বসিলেক বান্ধব সংহতি॥
শুনন্ত ভারত তবে অতি পুণ্যকথা।
মহামুনি জৈমুনি কহিল সংহিতা॥
অশ্বমেধ কথা শুনি প্রসন্নহৃদয়।
সভাখণ্ড আদেশিল খান মহাশয়॥
দেশী ভাষায় এই কথা রচিল পয়ার।
সঙ্ঘোরোক কীর্ত্তি মোর জগৎ সংসার॥

to his glory throughout the country. Placing the garland of royal order upon the head, Srikarana Nandi composed the poem in *Payara*."

The Poet's flattery.

The reference to the king of Tipperah in the above extracts is a distortion of historical facts, made by the poet to please his master. Early in the 16th century Dhanya Manikya was the king of Tipperah. He was a powerful monarch who, with the help of his celebrated general Chaichag, had successfully checked the advance of the invading Muhammadan armies into his territories by adopting prompt and vigorous measures; and Chhuti Khan had to remain contented with his possessions in the Chittagong hills.

A list of thirty-one writers.

We have come across thirty-one old writers in all, who compiled translations of the whole or portions of the Mahabharata. We give a list of them below:—

(1) Mahabharata by Sanjaya.
(2) Bharata Panchali written by the orders of Nasarat Shah (not yet recovered).
(3) Mahabharata by Kavindra Paramesvara.
(4) Asvamedha Parva by Srikarana Nandi.
(5) Do. do. by Dvija Abhirama.
(6) Santi Parva by Krisnananda Vasu (MSS. found dated 1694 A.D.)
(7) Asvamedha Parva by Ananda Misra.
(8) Mahabharata by Nityananda Ghosa.
(9) Asvamedha Parva by Dvija Ram Chandra Khan.
(10) Mahabharata by Dvija Kavi Chandra.
(11) Adiparva to Bharata Parva by Sarana.
(12) Bharata by Sasthivara.
(13) Adiparva and Asvamedha Parva by Ganga Das Sen.
(14) Adiparva by Rajendra Das.
(15) Drona Parva by Gopi Nath Datta.

(16) Mahabharata by Ramesvar Nandi.
(17) Do. by Kasi Ram Das.
(18) Bhisma Parva, Drona Parva and Karna Parva by Nandaram Das (adopted son of Kasiram Das).
(19) Mahabharata by Trilochana Chakravarti.
(20) Do. by Nemai Das.
(21) Drona Parva by Dvaipayana Das.
(22) Bharata by Vallabha Das.
(23) Asvamedha Parva by Dvija Krisnaram.
(24) Do. by Dvija Raghunath.
(25) The Nala Upakhyan by Loknath Datta.
(26) Do. by Madhusudan Napit.
(27) The Story of Savitri by Siva Chandra Sen.
(28) Bharata by Bhriguram Das.
(29) Asvamedha Parva by Dvija Ramakrisna.
(30) Do. by Bharat Pandit.
(31) Mahabharata compiled by the order of Dharma Manikya, king of Tipperah.

The original and its translations.

Of these writers Kavindra Paramesvara, as we have said, translated nearly the whole of the Mahabharata, and amongst others,—Sashthivara, Ramesvar Nandi, Trilochan Chakravarty, Nityananda Ghosa, Nimai Das, Vallabha Dev, and Bhriguram Das also attempted to translate the whole of the epic. Translations, in those days, as I have said, were not closely restricted to the texts. Besides omissions and changes, stories and incidents were freely added to the poems by the writers. The Bengali recensions, as compared with the original of Vyasa, appear to be, in many respects, quite different poems. One would hardly find in many of these works a score of lines together which would conform to the Sanskrit text. The Ramayana and Mahabharata were, so to speak, reborn in these Bengali recensions, which resembled the Sanskrit epic only as the child does its father. They offer many striking points of difference

which cannot be ignored. In the history of these differences is to be found the peculiar bent of the Bengali genius which, moulding the great epics in its own way, gave the Bengali recensions an air of originality of which we shall have to speak hereafter.

Sakuntala by Rajendra Das

Of the episodes translated from the Mahabharata, the story of Sakuntala by Rajendra Das, who flourished in the middle of the 17th century, is one of the best that we have found in the whole book. Though mainly following the Sanskrit text of Vyasa, the poet is indebted to Kalidas's Sakuntala and to Bhatti-Kavya, from which he culls many beautiful blossoms to adorn his tale. The fine poetical touch in—" There was no tank without its wealth of lilies, no lilies without bees, and no bees that did not hum under the enchantment of the honey,"—is evidently borrowed from a well-known passage in Bhatti-Kavya.

Draupadi fights.

In the Drona Parva by Gopinath Datta, Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, comes to the battle-field and fights. We do not find anything of this nature in the Sanskrit Epic. The author probably wrote from his imagination.

Gauri Mangal.

In 1806 A.D. Rajah Prithvi Chandra of Pakur wrote a poem in Bengali named Gauri Mangal. The work is interesting to us for its preface, in which he takes a bird's eye view of old Bengali literature, and gives us a list of some of the noteworthy Bengali writers who had preceded him. He refers thus to the translations of the Mahabharata :—

" Eighteen Parvas of the Mahabharata were rendered into Bengali verses by Kasiram Das and before him by Nityananda."

Nityananda Ghosa's Mahabharata

In Eastern Bengal, the Mahabharata by Sanjaya and by Kavindra Paramesvara once enjoyed great popularity, but in Western Bengal Nityananda Ghosa's Mahabharata was in high favour with the people until the advent of Kasiram Das. We know very little of Nityananda Ghosa; but that Kasiram Das, whose Mahabharata yields to no Bengali book

in its popularity amongst the masses excepting perhaps the Ramayana by Krittivasa, drew largely from Nityananda Ghosa's work, which was earlier in the field, admits of no doubt. The Kathakas and the professional singers of the Puranas had already popularised the story of the Mahabharata in the country. Those amongst them who attained celebrity, by their proficiency in the art of recitation and singing found numerous engagements all over the province. In their professional tours they visited all the important villages of the country, and thus the very language they used became familiar to the people. It is probably owing to this reason that in all the Bengali recensions of the Mahabharata, from Sanjaya and Kavindra to Kasi Das and even to more modern writers, we frequently come across the same lines almost word for word, as if the authors whose fields of activity lay at different places and who lived at remote distances of time from one another, had copied from the same source. If this is, generally speaking, true of the different Bengali recensions of Sanskrit works in our old literature, it is most of all so in the case of Kasiram Das's work and that of Nityananda which preceded it. We often find page upon page of the two works to be almost identical, the slight difference, observable in the two works, is no more than what we may find in two different manuscripts of the same book. We have evidence to prove that Kasiram Das did not himself write the whole of the Mahabharata, the authorship of which is attributed to him; and in many portions he simply revised Nityananda's compositions and incorporated them in his work. Kasiram Das was, however, an expert recensionist and showed much originality in his work. This point will be dealt with hereafter. In the meantime let us refer our readers to two stray passages of the two recensions (*viz.*, one by Nityananda and the other by Kasiram Das) to show how closely the two texts agree with each other. One extract will be sufficient for both, the slight difference being indicated in the footnote:—

Why do the various recensions so closely agree.

Kasiram and Nityananda

The Lamentation of Gandhari

"When Krisna's consoling words she heard she was restored to consciousness. The chaste Gandhari, daughter-in-law of Vichitravirya and Queen of Dhritarastra, said again to Krisna, "Behold Krisna—my hundred powerful sons lie dead on the field, struck by the iron mace of Bhima. O, look, my daughters-in-law, all princesses, are crying most bitterly—those whom the sun or the moon could not see,—whose body is tender as Sirisa flower, and whose beauty is a wonder, which the sun stops his chariot in the sky to observe—these ladies have come to the field of Kuruksetra poorly dressed and with hair dishevelled. Look at them, they are singing wildly—owing to excess of grief—their voice is heard like the sound of the lute of Narada. There, some widows, maddened by grief, have taken weapons in their hands and hero-like are dancing wildly,—I cannot bear it; I cannot find peace anywhere. O, where is my son Duryodhana! Where has he gone leaving his mother! Look at his condition now, O Krisna Over his head the regal umbrella of gold used to be spread. His body which was bedecked with pearls lies low in the dust!"

গান্ধারী বিলাপ।

কৃষ্ণের প্রবোধ-বাক্য মনেতে বুঝিয়া।
উঠিয়া বসিলা দেবী চেতন পাইয়া॥
পুনঃ বলে কৃষ্ণকে গান্ধারী পতিব্রতা।
বিচিত্রবীর্য্যের বধূ রাজার বনিতা॥
দেখ কৃষ্ণ একশত পুত্র মহাবল।
ভীমের গদায় যাতে মরিল সকল॥
দেখ কৃষ্ণ বধূ সব উচ্চৈঃস্বরে কাঁদে।
দেখিতে না পারে যারে সূর্য্য আর চাঁদে॥
শিরীষ কুসুম জিনি সুকোমল তনু।
দেখিয়া যাহার রূপ রথ রাখে ভানু॥
হেন সব বধূগণ আইল কুরুক্ষেত্রে।
মুক্তকেশ হীনবেশ দেখহ সাক্ষাতে॥

This almost *verbatim* agreement cannot be explained by the fact of the two works being equally translations from a common Sanskrit original. As I have said, Bengali recensions scarcely ever follow their texts closely; and in this instance the difference between the original and what is believed to be its translation, is really similar to that between the deep and measured tone of a European organ and the soft and melodious lay of an Indian lute.

Kasiram Das, a poet of the people.

We now come to Kasiram Das, admittedly the best of all recensionists of the Mahabharata. He draws largely from the preceding writers. Indeed his purpose is to revise their works and incorporate them in his own. But in spite of this, his poetic individuality is deeply impressed on many of those lines with which he illumines their compositions. But this is not all. He introduces episodes not to be found in the original Mahabharata, nor in any extant translation earlier than his own; and it is mainly in these additions that he displays the peculiar traits of his poetry.

ঐ দেখ নৃত্য করে নারী পতিহীনা।
শ্রুতিশব্দ শুনি যেন নারদের বীণা॥
পতিহীনা কত নারী বীরবেশ ধরি।
ঐ দেখ নৃত্য করে হাতে অস্ত্র করি॥
সহিতে না পারি শোক শান্ত নহে মন।
মাএ এড়ি কোথা গেল পুত্র দুর্য্যোধন॥
ওহে কৃষ্ণ হের দেখ পুত্রের অবস্থা।
যাহার মস্তকে ছিল স্বর্ণের ছাতা॥
নানা আভরণে যার তনু সুশোভন।
সে তনু ধূলায় ঐ দেখ নারায়ণ॥

From Nityananda Ghosa's Mahabharata.

Kasi Das gives exactly the same poem with the following alterations. In the 3rd line, in the place of পুনঃ বলে, we find কহে কিছু; the 12th line reads হিরকেশ মরবেশ দেখ তুমি নেত্রে; in the 16th line, we read কণ্ঠশব্দ for শ্রুতিশব্দ; in the 20th line, there is তাজি for এড়ি; in the 21st, দুর্মতি for অবস্থা; and in the 22nd ছাত্তি for ছাতা।

Kasiram Das was a poet of the people. Indeed his education, scope of intelligence and mode of treatment of his subjects were all such as to meet the requirements of the masses. Those deep problems of the soul, which are worked out in so many chapters of the original Mahabharata, he scarcely notices, or if he touches them at all, he dismisses very briefly. He narrates a story in an intensively popular fashion. His dogmatic pronouncements on religious matters and great reverence for the Brahmins are all characteristic of the views and beliefs of the crowd, and he scarcely ever rises above their level in the narration of the story of the great epic. He often worries the readers by repetition of common places; his exaggerations, besides, are such as some times to verge on the grotesque. But throughout his writings one feels a constant current of devotion, which flows like a noble stream purging and refining all grossness, and beautifying what is awkward and inelegant. The strength of popular Indian literature lies in the vehemence of faith which underlies its somewhat vulgar humour.

The devotional element.

There are many passages in Kasiram Das's Mahabharata which bear testimony to his ardour of belief, and in such passages, the Bengali recensionist wonderfully develops the materials at his command. The episode of the insult to Bibhisan, which does not occur at all in the original of Vyasa, is introduced by Kasiram with singularly happy effect. The piece shows the grandeur of Yudhisthira's Rajasuya sacrifice which was, it is said, attended by all the princes living in the vast continent, bounded on the North by the North Kurus, on the West by the dominions of the Yadavas, on the East by the Sea and on the South by Ceylon. Here had come King Jay Sen of Girivraja (in Bihar) with his gigantic array of boats that "covered sixty miles of the Ganges." Here was the Lord of Chedi with numerous feudatory chiefs who waited at the gate for days till he could obtain entrance into the Great Hall. Here the King Dirghajangha of Ayodhya (Oudh), with a picturesque array of noble steeds, elephants, and camels, patiently awaited

Insult to Bibhisan.

the command of the Great Emperor; and other mighty princes, too many in number to be mentioned, approached Yudhisthira with presents of immense gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, corals, invaluable stuff made of silk, fur and cotton,—big tuskers, musk-bearing deer and curious animals as horses with horns,—nay the very gods of Heaven were present here to do honour to Yudhisthira. In this grand assembly Bibhisan the King of Lanka, declined to bow down before Yudhisthira, saying that he never bowed to anybody on earth except to Krisna—the divine Incarnation. Insulted at every gate, in which the king of Raksasas witnessed the grandeur of the Rajasuya sacrifice, he still persisted in his determination not to do homage to the paramount Emperor. Krisna vainly tried to convince him of the greatness of Yudhisthira and when Bibhisan was still inexorable in his attitude of pride, the Lord took to a device to humiliate him.

Entering the Great Hall, Krisna found Yudhisthira seated on his throne, situated on a flight of 100 steps, and himself taking his stand above fifty steps manifested himself in his Visva-Rupa. Yudhisthira, seated behind him, could not see this manifestation of his divinity, but all others present saw it. Suddenly tiaras of gold crowns—a thousand of them—shone forth from the Divine Head. The astonished multitude saw thousands of arms holding resplendent weapons, thousands of eyes, that looked like solar orbs—the diamond *Kaustubha*—the great bow *Saranga*—the conch *Panchajanya*, the mace and the lotus—the sacred emblems of Divinity. This appeared as a vision too glorious, not only for human sight, but even for that of the gods. The great god Siva had come to see the Rajasuya Sacrifice under the guise of a Yogi, but the sight made him unconscious, and he revealed himself to all by falling at the feet of Krisna. Brahma also fainted there and his rosary and *kamandalu* dropped from his hands as he fell prostrate. Indra, the holder of the thunderbolt, with his host of gods, fell stunned by the sight, at the feet of Krisna, and all the princes, Bibhisan not being excepted, that had assembled there, fell prostrate at this glorious vision which even the gods

could not bear to look upon. Thus Krisna made the vast assembly of gods and men bow down in reverence apparently before the royal throne on which sat Yudhisthira in full glory. Pointing to this phenomenal sight of the bowing down of all, Krisna addressed Yudhisthira calling him the mightiest of all monarchs, to whom even the great gods had made their obeisance. The humble reply of Yudhisthira showed his devotion to the Lord, his great meekness and piety. The story, though crude in many respects, is a masterpiece of tender faith and it is in this point that Kasi Das always excels.

A brief account of the poet.

Kasiram Das was born in the village of Singi in Pargana Indrani in the district of Burdwan. This village is situated on the river Brahmani, and it was formerly known as Siddha or Siddhi. The poet belonged to the Kayastha caste, and his brothers and son were all gifted with poetic talent. His elder brother Krisna Das wrote a poem describing the events of Krisna's Life. The third brother, Gadadhara, wrote a very elegant book in honour of Jagannath of Puri in 1645 A.D. and named it "Jagat Mangala." From a reference to the Mahabharata by Kasiram Das in the above poem, we conclude that the former work was written before 1645 A.D.; and in fact we have further evidences of this, which will be dealt with hereafter. Kasiram Das's adopted son Nandaram Das (a son of the poet's brother Gadadhara) wrote the Drona Parva, which we find incorporated with Kasiram's Mahabharata, though the authorship of that Parva is popularly ascribed to Kasiram. There is a saying current in the country to the effect that Kasiram Das died after having finished the Adi, Sabha, Vana and portions of the Virata Parvas. The easy flow of verses, characterised by its Sanskritic expressions, which indicate the poetic individuality of Kasiram Das, is traceable in those cantos which are ascribed to him in the saying; and we believe that the latter part of the Mahabharata consists mostly of Nityananda Ghosa's writings revised and incorporated into the work, a few

The latter portion of the Mahabharata written by others.

more chapters having been added by Nanda Ram, the son of Kasiram Das. In these we miss the genial flow of Kasi Das's style and that sprinkling of choice Sanskritic expressions which abound in his compositions.*

Date and other particulars.

We know very little of the life of Kasiram Das. It is said that he was a school-master in the village of Awashgarh in the district of Midnapore; and that the above village having been an important resort of the Pandits and *Kathakas*, who recited the Puranas in the house of the local Raja, Kasi Das first conceived the desire to undertake a translation of the Mahabharata in their learned company. In Singi, the native village of the poet, there is a tank, which is called কেশে পুকুর after him. We are in possession of several dates which have a bearing on his time. The year in which "Jagat Mangal" was written by his brother Gadadhar has already been referred to. We know of a manuscript of Kasiram Das's Mahabharata in the hand-writing of Gadadhar; it was written in the year 1632 A.D. Nanda Ram Das made a deed of gift to his family priest in 1678 A.D. This must have been drawn up after Kasi Das's death, as during the lifetime of his father, Nanda Ram could not possibly have made a gift to the priest—a duty generally devolving upon the head of the family. From these dates we may safely conclude that Kasiram Das was born towards the latter part of the 16th century and lived till the middle of the seventeenth. At the instance of some young men of the village Singi, the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat of Calcutta is showing great activities in raising subscriptions for erecting a suitable memorial in honour of the poet in his native village.

A memorial in honour of the poet.

* Evidences have quite recently been found to substantiate this point. In an old MS. of this Mahabharata, Nandaram says that his uncle and father Kasi Das at the hour of his death regretted the circumstances of not being permitted to live to complete the great work he had undertaken, and piteously asked Nandaram to do the task left unfinished by him.

Kasiram Das's Mahabharata and Krittivasa's Ramayana are the two books which have been, for some centuries, *par excellence*, the great educative agencies of Bengal. What may appear as incongruous, crude and unpolished in them is, as I have said, due to the poets having adapted their works to the humble intellectual capacity of our uncultured peasantry, whom it was their aim to elevate. These poets have been, for ages, the fountain-heads from which have flowed wisdom and spirituality, striking the finer chords in the hearts of multitudes of Bengal, and their works are up to the present, a living source of inspiration throughout the country.

The two great epics have raised the character of the Bengali nation.

(c) *Translations of the Bhagavata*

Next to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata comes the Bhagavata in order of popularity throughout Bengal. The two epics have a universal interest for all the Hindus, but the Bhagavata is mainly restricted to the Vaisnavas. Though its circulation is thus narrower, yet its votaries admire it the more highly, in fact it is looked upon by them as the only sacred book and is revered with the Vedas. The Bhagavata has passages of high poetic merit; its descriptions of the pastoral scenes and rural sports of Krisna particularly are greatly admired; they have found peculiar favour in Bengal. The scene is laid on the banks of the Jumna. Krisna here, is not only the god of love, but retains his omnipotent character, even as a shepherd boy. King Kansa of Mathura, bent on killing him, sends the demon-nurse Putana, who with poison in her nipples tried to kill the child, but Krisna while sucking her breasts draws out her life-blood and kills her. The great demon Trinavarta comes riding on a whirl-wind, and the shepherds who were grazing their cows on the banks of the Jumna,

Bhagavata has a pastoral interest: its contents.

Krisna encounters Putana, Trinavarta, Vaka, Krimira and other demons.

are awe-struck, when Krisna who is with them, pulls the demon down by his hair, and destroys him in the severe fight which ensues. The demons Vaka, Krimira and a host of others, sent by Kansa, are killed in succession by Krisna. The God Indra, whose worship was forbidden by him, dooms Vrindavana to destruction, by sending heavy showers of rain for seven consecutive days and nights and exposing it to thunderstorms. But Krisna holds up the mount Govardhana with the tip of his finger and so makes it a shelter for the village. The thunderer is weary; the stormy winds crash against the rock; the lightning makes deep cavities in it; hailstones destroy the trees; but beneath lies Vrindavana snug and cozy—not one of its herbs is touched, nor a leaf nor a petal of its sweet Kadamba flowers is broken under the surging floods which pass over the rock Govardhana. The accounts of these exploits and victories, however, are but of minor interest in the poem, its main attraction being the pastoral occupation—the sports and the domestic scenes, descriptions of which are interspersed amongst those of the valorous exploits of Krisna, undertaken to protect his friends who resigned themselves to his care. The tender love of his mother Jasoda, unwilling to part with him in the morning (when his comrades and fellow-shepherd boys call him to join their games and his elder brother Balarama invites him to the groves by sounding his horn), lest he fall into the snares of Kansa, ever plotting against his life; the beautiful pastimes indulged in by the shepherds, in which Krisna takes a prominent part;—his love-making with the milkmaids; and above all the deep religious meaning given to each passage by the enlightened Vaisnava interpreters who invest the poem with high devotional significance even in apparently realistic descriptions—all these combine to make the Bhagavata one of the most remarkable poems of the world. But as it is written in very academic Sanskrit, it is likely to lose its main charm by translation into non-Sanskritic languages.

He holds up the mount Govardhana.

The domestic and pastoral scenes.

The deep religious meaning.

Maladhar Vasu, the first translator—1473 A.D.

Maladhar Vasu, the first translator of the Bhagavata in Bengali and a Kayastha by caste, was a courtier of the Emperor Husen Shah at whose orders he commenced translating the tenth and the eleventh canto of the Bhagavata in 1473 A.D. and completed the work in 1480 A.D. The work is named Srikrisna Vijaya Husen Shah conferred on the poet the title of Gunaraja Khan as a reward for his literary services. Maladhar Vasu was a native of Kulinagrama and belonged to the Vasu family of that place, who at the time wielded great influence and power. The village was fortified and the pilgrims to Puri were required to take a *Duri* or a kind of passport from the Vasus of Kulinagrama, without which no one was allowed to visit the shrine. Maladhar Vasu wrote his work with a facile pen. The easy and graceful flow of his style is very marked throughout the book. I quote here a passage* :—"When they had finished eating, the shepherds sounded the horn and marched. The cows followed them, and all assembled on the banks of the Jumna. On the way, the spirit of fun found many kinds of expression. Here the cuckoos were blithely singing and Krisna imitated their notes. There the monkeys were leaping from bough to bough and he and his comrades went climbing and leaping with them. Again, the peacocks were dancing and the lads copied the dance. The birds were flying in the sky, and their shadows on the earth were pursued by Balarama and Krisna

The merry sports of the shepherds.

* প্রভাতে ভোজন করি শিঙ্গা বাজাইয়া।
পিছে পিছে চলে যত বাছুর চালাইয়া॥
একত্র হইল সবে যমুনার তীরে।
নানা মত ক্রীড়া করে দেব দামোদরে॥
কথাতে কোকিল পক্ষীগণে নাদ করে।
তার সঙ্গে নাদ করে দেব গদাধরে।
কথাতে মর্কট শিশু লাফ দেহি রঙ্গে।
সেই মতে যায় কৃষ্ণ বালকের সঙ্গে॥
কথাতে ময়ূর পক্ষী মধু নাদ করে।
সেই মত নৃত্য করে দেব দামোদরে॥

who danced as they did so. The trees abounded with flowers which they gathered as they went; some Krisna wore on his head and some he placed on his heart."

Radha introduced in the poems.

The Bengali translation of Maladhar Vasu, it should be said, is not literal, and Radha, whom we do not find mentioned in the Bhagavata, is introduced in this Bengali recension where the poetic passages describing her deep spiritual love awake the loveliest interest. By this innovation, Maladhar Vasu strikes the key-note of those love-poems on Krisna and Radha, with which the Vaisnava works of later times abound.

Other translators of the Bhagavata.

After Maladhar Vasu came a host of Bengali recensionists of the Bhagavata. They generally restricted themselves to the tenth canto of the work. I give a brief notice of these authors and their works below :—

2. Srikrisna Mangala by Madhavacharya. This work was dedicated to Chaitanya Deva. The author was a pupil of the *Tola* founded by Chaitanya and was related to him. This work was written early in the 16th century.
3. Srikrisna Mangala by Nandaram Das.
4. Srikrisna Vijaya by Krisna Das, a brother of Kasiram Das. Krisna Das was decorated with the title of Krisna Kinkara, on his writing this work.
5. Gopala Vijaya by Kavivallabha.
6. Govinda Mangal by Sankara Kavichandra.
7. Gokula Mangala by Bhaktarama.
8. Krisna Mangala by Dvija Laksminatha.

All the above-named works are voluminous in size, and were written more than three hundred years ago. Govinda

কথা কথা পক্ষীএ আকাশে উড়ি যাই।
তার ছায়া সঙ্গে নাচে রাম কাহ্নাই॥
কথা বা সুগন্ধি পুষ্প তুলিয়া মুরারি।
কত ছন্দে মস্তকে শ্রবণে কেশে পরি॥

Bhagavata by Maladhar Vasu.

Mangala by Sankara Kavichandra was the most popular of all of these. We have already referred to the other works of Sankara Kavichandra. Of other writers who translated portions, I name some below :—

9. Bhagavata by Nandarama Ghosa.
10. Do. by Aditya Rama.
11. Do. by Abhirama Das.
12. Do. by Dvija Banikantha.
13. Do. by Damodara Das.
14. Do. by Kavi Sekhara.
15. Do. by Yadunandana.
16. Do. by Yasaschandra.

Here is a list of translators of episodes from the Bhagavata :—

17. Hansaduta by Narasimha Das.
18. Do. by Madhava Gunakara.
19. Do. by Krisna Chandra.
20. Prahlad Charitra by Dvija Kamsari.
21. Do. by Sitaram Das.
22. Uddhava Samvada by Madhava.
23. Do. by Ram Sarkar.
24. Do. by Ramtanu.
25. Dhruva Charitra by Parasurama.
26. Do. by Dvija Jayananda.
27. Sudama Charitra by Jivana Chakravarti.
28. Do. by Govinda Das.
29. Do. by Parasurama.
30. Ushaharana by Pitambar Sen.
31. Do. by Srikantha Deva.
32. Gajendra Mokshana by Dvija Durga Prasad.
33. Do. by Vamana Bhikshu.
34. Do. by Bhavani Das.
35. Mani-harana by Kamala Kantha.
36. Vastra-harana by Ramtanu Kaviratna.
37. Guru-dakshina by Vipra Ruparam.

38. Guru-dakshina by Syama Lal Datta.
39. Do. by Ayodhyaram.
40. Do. by Sankaracharya.

Of the manuscripts of the above works, none was copied later than the eighteenth century; and the composition of most of them is no doubt to be referred to a much earlier period

(*d*) *Translations of Chandi of Markandeya*

Markandeya-Chandi and its contents.

We now come to another Sanskrit work held in high esteem as a sacred book. Numerous translations of this work are also to be found in old Bengali literature. This is the Chandi by Markandeya. It describes how the goddess Chandi first manifested herself in heaven. Raja Suratha was driven from his kingdom by his enemies, who had already subdued the Kols. The Raja rode a horse and wandered near the hermitage of Markandeya where he met a Vaisya named Samadhi. This man had immense wealth but his wife and children had taken possession of it and driven him away.

Raja Suratha and the Vaisya.

In the hermitage the king and the Vaisya with hearts heavy-laden with grief met and related to each other the sad story of their misfortunes. They both brooded over their conditions, the king upon his lost kingdom, and the Vaisya on his wife and children who had so cruelly treated him. The king asked Markandeya, the sage, as to why he could not find peace of mind. What was it that caused him so much pain! He knew that it was unavailing now to grieve over what could not be recovered. He referred also to the condition of his friend the Vaisya,—his mind still yearning for the sight of his wife and children, though they had ill-treated him. Markandeya said that it was that power of God, which producing phenomena that bear a semblance of truth without being true, blindfolded all living beings. By this power

Theory of Illusion

which produces illusion, men are confounded and become unable to distinguish what is true from what is not true. The phenomenal and unreal world seems as real to them; and they ignore God, the only Great Reality. This, the sage said, is the cause of all human woes. This Power of the Supreme Deity is Mahamaya (lit. Great Illusion) or Chandi—personated as a goddess whose mercy alone, it was urged, could assuage the pain of troubled hearts. We need not enter into the philosophy of this faith. It is a solution of the problem of evils, arrived at from a point of view, other than that in which a god of evil matches his power against a god of good. Being asked how this goddess came into existence, Markandeya said that she who appears as the phenomena of the Universe is eternal, but people trace her origin from that time when she first became manifest to the gods.

The mythological story.

Here the sage gives a mythological story. At one time the demon Mahisasura became so powerful that he took possession by force of the kingdom of heaven, driving away Indra, its king, and the god of death, of wealth, and of ocean who were his associates and officers. Crestfallen and humiliated they wandered for a time on earth, bemoaning their lot, and then went to Vaikuntha, with Brahma at their head, and applied to Visnu—the greatest god of the Hindu Trinity, for help. Visnu heard the story of the misfortunes that had befallen them and anger flashed from his brow. Simultaneously on the angry faces of Siva and Brahma, appeared the same terrible light. The other gods were also moved by sudden anger and from that vast assembly sparks of fire arose like a terrible conflagration and extended to the farthest limits of the firmament. This fire, which appeared as a destructive force, gradually gathered itself together and took the shape of a goddess resplendent in glory, who stood majestically before the mighty host of gods. The sparks of godly power from Siva created the queen-like majesty of the face of the goddess, those from Yama created her mass of black hair which fell behind her like the clouds. Her arms were made by the sparks that

emanated from Visnu. The Sun-god saturated every pore of her body with his rays; her eye-brows were created by the power of Sandhya—the goddess of evening, and her third eye on the forehead, which shone fiercely, was born of the power of Agni—god of fire. Earth trembled under the feet of this majestic goddess and her crown touched the skies. The gods in concert chanted her glory. Krisna gave her his divine discus, Siva his great trident, Varuna his conches, Indra his thunder-bolt and Brahma his rosary. Visvakarma gave her his axe, a necklace and a pair of *Napura*. The god of ocean gave her a garland of lotuses which never fade. The goddess who was thus an outcome of the united power and glory of all the gods, challenged Mahisasura to a fight, and killed him in the severe contest which ensued. In subsequent times when the gods were pressed by the demons Sumbha and Nisumbha, she again came to their rescue and killing the demonic brothers, restored Indra to his throne. Suratha, the king and Samadhi, the Vaisya, afterwards obtained their lost possessions by the grace of this goddess. This is briefly the tale, as related in the Chandi by Markandeya.

Vedantic philosophy in Chandi.

Though it gives a mythological account, it contains high metaphysical truths embodying in them the essence of the Vedantic philosophy.

The Durga Puja.

The Durgapuja festival, which is held with great *eclat* in Bengal, commemorates the victory of Chandi or Durga over Mahisasura.

Of those who translated 'Chandi' into Bengali we shall here mention a few. The first of them was Bhavani Prasad Kar,

The translators of Chandi. Bhavani Prasad, the blind poet.

a Vaidya by caste, who lived in the earlier part of the 16th century. Here are a few lines from the long autobiographical account that he gives of himself.

"I was born in a Vaidya family of Kantalia (in the district of Mymensingh). I have attemped to compose this poem in honour of Durga (Chandi). She has made me miserable from my birth. Providence did not grant me eyes. I have taken

refuge at the feet of Durga, having no place to stand on in this world." *

After having described his domestic troubles chiefly brought about by the wickedness of his nephew, he says,—I was born in the Kar family of Kantalia. My father's name is Nayan Krisna Kar. God created me without eyes. So I do not know the alphabet and cannot write." †

His translation of Chandi is very close to the text,—a novel feature in a work of this class, for which we ought to be thankful to the blind poet, but as he did not know how to read or write, and had to depend upon his ear, to acquire the art of poetical composition, his rhyming is not faultless. There is a nice distinction between *ma* and *na*, *ta* and *tha*, and *ta* and *da* in Bengali, which at once strikes the eye when looking over a written page but which we often miss in the spoken form of the language. Thus poor Bhavani Prasad's poem displays faults which in his case were almost unavoidable; yet his work is creditable notwithstanding these drawbacks, and though he is not a blind Homer or a blind Milton of Bengal, yet he is our blind Bhavani Prasad for aught he is worth, and deserves our praise. We quote below a passage from his translation to show how the blind poet often retained the sublimity of the classical poem by the very unassuming simplicity of his style which closely imitated the original.

Defect in rhyming

The sublimity of the classical poem retained.

* নিবাস কাঁটালিয়া গ্রাম বৈদ্য কুলজাত।
দুর্গার মঙ্গল বোলে ভবানীপ্রসাদ॥
জন্মকাল হৈতে কালী করিলা দুঃখিত।
চক্ষুহীন করি বিধি করিলা লিখিত॥
মনে দৃঢ়াইয়াছি আমি কালীর চরণ।
দাঁড়াইতে আমার নাহিক কোন স্থান॥

† কাঁটালিয়া গ্রামে করবংশেতে উৎপত্তি।
নয়নকৃষ্ণ নামে রায় তাঁহার সন্ততি॥
জন্ম অন্ধ বিধাতা যে করিলা আমারে।
অক্ষরপরিচয় নাহি লিখিবার তরে॥

"Thou, O Goddess, that dwellest in all, manifesting Thyself in the intelligence of the created beings, a hundred times do I salute Thee.

"Thou that dwellest in the hearts of all manifesting Thyself in human kindness, a hundred times do I salute Thee.

"Thou that revealest Thyself in all pervading motherly love, a hundred times do I salute Thee." *

Rupanarayan Ghosa. Born 1597 A.D.

The next writer who translated 'Chandi' was Rupanarayan Ghosa—a Kayastha. Rupanarayan was born about the year 1597 A.D. He was a native of Amdala in the sub-division of Manikganj in the district of Dacca. He was well-versed in the Sanskrit classics but did not closely follow the text. He showed his erudition and poetical powers by importing poetical ideas from various Sanskrit poems into his translation to which he also added passages from his own fancy.

Vrajalal

We next come across Chandi by Vrajalal Judging by the language, it appears that this poem was written about the same time as Rupanarayan's. But the next work on Chandi by Yadu Nath displays a far greater power than most of the preceding works of this class.

Jadunath.

Yadu Nath was born in Sarkhabari on the river Ghagat in Pargana Andhu (Police Station, Mithapur) in the district of Rangpur. His work was written in the latter part of the 17th century. We quote a passage from the poem in which he describes the union of Siva and Uma who are so blended as to form one figure. This figure is known in Hindu mythology as Ardhanarisvara. Bengali poets and painters alike have applied their talent to the representation of this figure which seems to have a peculiar charm for them.

Ardhanarisvara.

* যেহি দেবী বুদ্ধিরূপে সর্ব্বভূতে থাকে।
নমস্কার নমস্কার নমস্কার তাকে॥
যেহি দেবী দয়ারূপে সর্ব্বভূতে থাকে।
নমস্কার নমস্কার নমস্কার তাকে॥
যেহি দেবী মাতৃরূপে সর্ব্বভূতে থাকে।
নমস্কার নমস্কার নমস্কার তাকে॥

There are three figures in our pantheon which illustrate such a blending: (1) Siva and Uma, (2) Siva and Visnu, (3) Krisna and Radha. We quote from Yadunath to illustrate the first, and from Kasidas to show the second.

"My life has to-day been made blessed by seeing Siva and Uma united in a single form. On one side are beautiful black locks and on the other a thick array of loosely hanging matted hair. On half the breast hangs a garland of heavenly Parijat flowers, on the other half, beads of *Rudraksa* strung together to form a rosary. The left half of the figure is scented with rich sandal perfumes, and the right half is covered with the dust of the funeral ground. On the left half the finest apparel appears whose colour shines like the sun and on the other a tiger's skin brought from the forests!—Uma and Siva blended in one. To the feet of both Yadunath offers his humble worship in the cadence of Gaura *Sarang*."* This image carries a mystic significance amongst enlightened Saivas. The form of Uma represents the fineness and delicacy of earthly life and that of Siva, the grimness of death.

Life and Death united.

Here, as in the actual world, life and death are united;—from the smiles of youth the wrinkles of age are inseparable,—the flower that blooms and the flower that fades

* আজি কি পেখনু সম্মিলিত হরগৌরী।
সফল ভেলহি নয়নযুগল মেরি॥
চাঁচর বেণী বিরাজিত কাঁহ।
কাঁহ পরলম্বিত বিনোদ জটাউ॥
পারিজাতমালা গলে গিরিবালা।
গিরিগণ্ডে দোলে লোহিতাক্ষমালা॥
মলয়জপঙ্কপ্রলেপ অঙ্গ চাঁহ।
চিতাধূলিভূষণ ত্রিজগতগুরু॥
লোহি লোহিতাম্বরঝলক জিনি সোহা।
বাঘাম্বর কাঁহ জলদদল মোঁহা॥
হরগৌরী নিরখে গৌরীসারং লোকাই।
যদুনাথ উভয়চরণে বলি জাই॥

Yadunath.

appear on the same bough. This embrace of life by death is a common phenomenon, and the Hindu devotee does not see in it anything to strike terror to his heart or make him sad. He takes it as a fact of the immutable law of nature and views it with a feeling of reverence which inspires his songs with poetry.

Siva and Visnu

The next figure of this sort is that of Siva and Visnu. Visnu here is the God of glory—of power and of life, and Siva that of death. They are united in one image.*

"They merged one in the other and became united in one form. Half the body was covered with ashes and the other half with sweet-scented *Kasturi*. From one half the head hung matted locks, and from the other flowing curls of finest hair. Over one half the head, the serpent hissed, the other was illumined by a glorious crown. On half the brow appeared the sweet-scented print of the *Kasturi*, and on the other blazed flames of fire. Half the neck was wreathed with flowers, about the other half, hung bones. From one ear hung the pendants and the glorious earing bearing the emblem of *Makara*, and from the other small serpents, coiling into the form of a ring. On half the

* "আলিঙ্গনে যুগল শরীর হৈল এক।
অর্দ্ধ ভস্মভূষা হৈল কস্তুরী অর্দ্ধেক॥
অর্দ্ধ জটাজূট অর্দ্ধ চিকুর চাঁচর।
অর্দ্ধেক কিরীট অর্দ্ধ ফণি ফণাধর॥
কস্তুরী তিলক অর্দ্ধ অর্দ্ধ বহ্নিজ্বালা।
অর্দ্ধ গলে হাড়মাল অর্দ্ধ বনমালা॥
মকরকুণ্ডল কর্ণে কুণ্ডলীকুণ্ডল।
শ্রীবৎসলাঞ্ছন অর্দ্ধ শোভিত গরল॥
অর্দ্ধ বলয়জ অর্দ্ধ ভস্মকলেবর।
অর্দ্ধ বাঘাম্বর কটি অর্দ্ধ পীতাম্বর॥
এক পদে ফণী একে কনক নূপুর।
শঙ্খচক্র করে শোভে ত্রিশূলডম্বুর॥" Kasi Das.

neck there was the brilliant diamond *Kaustubha* and on the other the blue mark of poison. Half the figure was scented with sandal perfumes and the other half covered with the dust of the funeral ground. From half the body hung a loose tiger's skin and the other half was apparelled in rich purple. On one of the feet was the sweet sounding *Nupura* and on the other a ring of serpents. Two hands held conch and discus and the other two the trident and the *Damburu*."

Here also the world is emblemed in a highly poetic language and in a manner which appeals seriously to the Hindu mind. The sublime and the beautiful in nature, the elegance and glory of life, pass into the desolation of the cremation ground. This figure is sacred amongst Hindus as embodying the facts of life without ignoring those of death, and both are placed side by side in their natural harmony, instead of that grim contrast in which they are generally regarded elsewhere.

The union of various cults.

Another significant point in the conception of this blending of the deities is that it could only be possible when the various sects of the Hindus—the Saivas, the Saktas and the Vaisnavas were so far reconciled as to accept one another's ideal in religion.

It should be said that the description of Ardhanarisvara given from the poem of Yadunath does not occur in the original Chandi by the sage Markandeya.

Chandi by Kamalanarayana, 1717 A.D.

The next translation of Chandi was from the pen of Kamalanarayana, a son of Yadunath. This poem contains many passages which are truly poetic. It was written about the year 1717. The Mohammadan Governor of Bengal to whom he refers in his book was probably Shah Suja, son of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan.

Other translations.

The translations of other works such as Padmavata by Alaol and Gitagovinda by Rasamaya and Giridhar, do not fall within the scope of the Pauranic Renaissance, so we shall refer to them in a future chapter.

Translations stamped with originality.

The writers of the works dealt with in this chapter, did not, as I have already said, proceed on the plan of literal translation; that would have given them only a literary interest. The translations were reproductions of ancient ideas with modern accretion of thought, meant to act as a living force for the education and ennoblement of the people—the element of philosophical interpretation was an innovation which gave them a stamp of originality peculiar to the Bengali genius.

3. The Conception of Siva in the Renaissance and Songs in Honour of Him.

The later Saiva literature

The later form of Saiva literature contains the leading characteristics of the Renaissance period, though it lost a good deal of its importance as the songs of Siva no longer formed the main theme of Bengali songs. We require to write in some detail how Saivism was gradually pushed into a corner by the advancing Sakta cult.

Other deities lavish favours upon their worshippers.

The inertness of Siva in old Bengali poems is very well-marked. Chandi in that literature is an extremely active deity; so is Manasa Devi, and all those other divinities in whose honour poems were composed in old Bengali. These Gods and Goddesses would not have borne to see a tear in the eyes of their worshippers; whenever they fall into danger they are sure to obtain succour. A Chandi, a Manasa Devi, even a Sitala or a Satyanarayana is always devising plans as to how a devotee may be rescued from danger, how scoffers may be put down or how the earthly prosperity of believers may be increased. But Siva, the Great God, is inert and immovable. In the poem of Chandi, Dhanapati Sadagar is exposed to all imaginable dangers; he is thrown into a gloomy dungeon, where a stone, heavy enough to crush the strongest man is placed on his person. At the moment when his sufferings are the greatest, Chandi appears to him and

calls upon him to have faith in her, promising him great rewards. Dhanapati replies—"Even though in this dungeon my life goes out, I will not worship any other deity than Siva."* In Manasar Bhasana we find Chand Sadagar put through the most harrowing trials because he will not worship Manasa Devi. Yet he remains firm in his devotion to Siva. "I will not defile the hand with which I worship Siva by offering worship to Manasa Devi, that goddess who is blind of one eye."†—he said in great contempt when he was offered prosperity and happiness provided he agreed to worship Manasa Devi King Chandraketu in Sitalamangal, in spite of his great troubles, would not worship Sitala Devi and remained true to Siva. But what do the followers of Siva gain as the reward for their heroic devotion to his cause! The great Siva passive and inert, cares not for the sufferings of his followers. So it is no wonder that the followers of other deities who lavished favour upon the believers and undertook to destroy their enemies and confer wealth and prosperity without being asked, increased daily in number, till the poems in honour of Siva, though forming a part of the earliest literature of Bengal, were gradually overshadowed by larger and more poetic compositions in honour of Manasa Devi, Chandi and Satyanarayana.

While Siva is indifferent to his worshippers.

Saiva-literature goes to the background.

The Muhammadans with their vigorous living faith had by this time come to Bengal. Their Koran, which they believed to be inspired, lays it down that the God of Islam helps believers and destroys unbelievers. The strong belief of Islam in a personal God had to be counteracted in this country by forms of

The struggle to counteract Islamite influence and the development of the Sakta and Vaisnava cults.

* যদি বন্দীশালে মোর বাহিরায় প্রাণী।
মহেশ ঠাকুর বিনে অন্য নাহি জানি॥ Kavi Kankan.

† যে হস্তেতে পূজি আমি দেব শূলপাণি,
সে হস্তে না পূজিব চেঙ্গ মুড়ি কাণি।
Ketaka Das.

religion in which the personal element of divinity predominated. So the Sakta and the Vaisnava religions flourished and the Saiva religion with its impersonal ideal and mysticism, in which man rose to the level of his God in the *Advaitavada*, was gradually thrown into the background, as the masses did not comprehend its speculative features.

Saivaism.

The enlightened Saivas attempted to reach a stage where the human soul is said to become so elevated as to be identical with the divine spirit. 'শিবোঽং শিবোঽং,' 'I am Siva, I am Siva' was uttered by the great propounder of the Saiva cult Sri Sankaracharyya in the 7th century, and his followers tried to imitate him.

Siva and Sakti.

Siva represents, in the eyes of the enlightened, a spiritual principle, which to use a philosophical expression, may be called the noumenon. The phenomenal world is attributed to Sakti—the goddess Chandi, of whom I have already spoken. Sakti is ever-active, creating the never-ceasing illusions of the visible universe. All that we see around is produced by Sakti who acts upon our senses and causes our sorrows and pleasures. But Siva is inactive—passionless, feelingless, unknown and unknowable, *nirguna* or without qualities. Yet Sakti could not produce the visible, ever-changing forms of this universe without coming in touch with Siva, the noumenon or the permanent principle. To the shifting phenomena of the world—to our everchanging visible environment, Siva gives a permanence:—so that when one spring is over, its permanent principle, worked by Sakti, brings on a new spring in the place of the old,—the blooming flower in the place of the faded one. Siva, then, is the great bridge that connects the lost with the found,—the universe that changes with the universe that is unchanging. The Puranas represent the figure of Siva as lying like a corpse on which dances Sakti or Kali in destructive ecstasy. One of her four hands holds the severed head of a demon, the other a sword, implying the punishment of sin, but the third is stretched out in the act of giving a boon and the fourth offers

benediction. The last two indicate her protection of those who resign themselves to her care.

This world, ever-moving towards destruction, is symbolised in Sakti; but she gives hope also that the virtuous will be saved. Beyond the sphere of virtue and vice, of pleasure and pain, is the permanent principle of the spiritual world—Siva who is immovable, representing Eternity in the midst of all that shifts. The *Yogis*, who try to attain a stage where pleasure does not please and sorrow does not cause pain, aim at the spiritual condition of Siva. Thus they arrive at the permanent and abiding principle, and are not subject to the joys and pains that flesh is heir to. At this stage one may say that he is one with the divine spirit or শিবোহং শিবোহং (I am Siva, I am Siva.).

The popular Saivaism.

The noble qualities of Siva, to which we alluded in a previous chapter, acted on the multitude as a great attraction, but gradually as this religion took a subtle and mystic form, it grew unintelligible to the masses. Let us here deal with its popular aspects as they are found in our old literature.

We referred, in a previous chapter, to the songs of Siva.—Siva, according to popular notions, divested of all glory, sunk into a peasant, a beggar and a *Ganja*-smoker. He drank *Siddhi* and ate the fruit of the *Dhutura*. An agricultural character was attributed to him by those rustic bards who composed the pastoral songs. The Pauranic conception of Siva as a *Bhiksu*,—probably borrowed from the Buddhistic idea of renunciation,—degenerated amongst the masses, and the Great God was reduced to the level of a beggar. The mythology, that narrated the story of Siva, swallowing poison to protect the universe from destruction, lent credulity to the story of his taking profuse doses of *Siddhi* and *Dhutura*,—thus the peasants of Bengal gave a form to the Great God that mirrored the condition of their own life. But his edifying character was not altogether lost in this humble delineation. Indifference to the world, and an ever-contented dis-

The god of the peasants.

Addicted to intoxicating drugs.

position, not ruffled by circumstances, befitting a *Yogi*, could yet be discovered in the character given him by the rustic poets.

But Bengali literature gradually grew more refined as it attracted the notice of scholars; and Siva as represented in the popular compositions, could no longer satisfy the enlightened taste of the multitudes who listened to the Saiva songs. These songs fell into popular disfavour as the elements of the personal God were found more or less wanting in Siva, and only a few writers, latterly, took up the subject for poetry. The character that had been attributed to Siva by the people in the days of Buddhistic degeneracy was still retained in these songs, but a new element was introduced into them, which served as an attraction to the rising generations inspired by the superior ideals of the Pauranic Renaissance.

The new element in Saiva literature.

The domestic element is prominent in the later songs on Siva. In them he plays the rôle of the patriarch of a family, where Kartika and Ganesa his sons, Laksmi and Sarasvati his daughters, Nandi and Bhringi his savage-servants, and above all Uma, his devoted wife, figure conspicuously. Uma was married to Siva when she was merely a child. She was the daughter of Mount Himavat, who gave her to Siva, in his old age owing to the pleading and intercession of Narada. The poets who wrote on the subject of this marriage had before them the scenes of a Bengali home. In such homes girls of a very tender age were occasionally given in marriage to old men and the situation created pathos too deep for expression. Uma, a girl of eight, was married to the old Siva—who was a beggar, hopelessly addicted to intoxicating drugs and so poor that he could not give a pair of shell-bracelets to his bride. There are innumerable songs in Bengali, describing the pathetic situation. In the month of Asvin (October-November) the whole atmosphere of Bengal, rings with the *Agamani* songs, sung by the *Vairagis* which

Siva as the patriarch of a family.

The joys and sorrows of Bengali homes under a mythological garb. The *Agamani* songs.

describe the meeting of Uma with her mother ; and there is no Bengali to whom they do not appeal most tenderly. The domestic scenes of Bengal—the sorrows of Bengali parents—are really the themes of the songs, though they profess to deal with mythological subjects, which bear a realistic interest, full of deep pathos. There the queen of Himavat in the month of Asvin, says to her lord—"Go thou and bring my Uma, I know not how she fares in Kailasa without me. I heard from Narada that she wept and cried 'O mother, O mother.' Siva takes profuse quantity of *Bhang* and *Siddhi* he loses his senses under their influence, and rebukes Uma for no fault of hers. Siva has sold all the clothes and valuable ornaments, that you gave Uma, to purchase intoxicating drugs."* In another song the queen of Himavat says—"O Lord of the mountains, my Uma came to me in a dream and when my heart swelled with joy at the meeting, she disappeared. Alas! how cruel is she to her mother! then I felt that it is no fault of hers, O mountain, she is a true daughter of thee to inherit that heart of stone."† In another, when Uma grew older and gave birth to Kartika and Ganesa the queen says, 'O Himavat, all that you said about

* যাও যাও গিরি আনিতে গৌরী,
উমা কেমনে রয়েছে।
আমি শুনেছি শ্রবণে নারদবচনে,
মা মা বলে উমা কেঁদেছে॥
ভাঙ্গেতে ভাঙ্গড় পীরিতি বড়,
ত্রিভুবনের ভাঙ্গ করেছে জড়।
ভাঙ্গ খেয়ে ভোলা হয়ে দিগম্বর,
আমার উমারে কত কি বলেছে॥
উমার বসনভূষণ যত আভরণ,
তাও বেচে ভাঙ্গ খেয়েছে॥ Old song.

† গিরি গৌরী আমার এসেছিল, স্বপ্নে দেখা দিয়ে,
চৈতন্য করিয়ে, চৈতন্যরূপিনী কোথায় লুকাল।
দেখা দিয়ে কেন এত মায়া তার।
মায়ের প্রতি মায়া নাহি মহামায়ার॥
আবার ভাবি গিরি কি দোষ অভয়ার।
পিতৃদোষে মেয়ে পাষাণী হ'ল॥ Old song.

my Uma, has pierced my heart as with a sword. My poor Ganesha, you said, was crying and going from door to door in hunger, and Kartika, my darling, when almost starved, fell on the dusty earth and cried for food."* Yet Uma was the daughter of a king. The household of Siva—a scene of extreme indigence is painted in contrast with that of king Himavat and the sorrows of the queen who was in affluence herself, at the recollection of Uma's sufferings and those of her sons, find expression in the old songs which at once appeal to the heart. Innumerable songs of this class are sung every year in Bengal by the professional singers who visit almost every house in the month of Asvin; and where is the heart so hard that it can refrain from tears, while hearing them. The girls here, of too tender an age to play the wife, are often taken away from the custody of parents. With veils over their faces they have to stay in their husband's home, speak in whispers and subject themselves to the painful discipline of the daughter-in-law. At an age when they should skip and bound like wild deer, these tender beings have to live in a home to which as yet they are strangers, subject to possible censure at every step, and cut off from their parents and play-mates. When the *Agamani* songs, describing the sorrows of Menaka—the queen of Himavat, and of Uma, her daughter are sung by professional singers, the eyes of many a child-wife glisten behind her veil, and the hearts of their mothers cry out for the daughters who have been taken away from them. The *Shephalika* flower falls to the ground in showers under the clear autumnal sky of Bengal and the breeze blows softly in the season of these songs. The singers generally have an *Ekatara* or one-stringed lute with them, which chimes in well with their plaintive voice in the modulation of grief. The month of

Song during the *Puja* time in the month of Asvin.

* তুমি যে কতদিন গিরিরাজ আমায় কয়েছ কত কথা,
সে কথা আছে শেলসম আমার হৃদয়ে গাথা।
আমার লম্বোদর নাকি উদরের জ্বালায় কেঁদে কেঁদে বেড়াত,
হয়ে অতি ক্ষুধার্ত্তিক সোণার কার্ত্তিক ধূলায় পড়ে লুটাত। Old song.

Asvin, in the eyes of every Hindu, is inseparably associated with these songs even as it is with *Shephalika* flower and the clear sky of autumn. During the *Pujas* which take place in this month, friends and relations meet in Bengali homes, the joyful tears of many a mother are mingled with her daughters' while they narrate to one another how the bitter days of separation were passed. The pictures, drawn by our village-painters, are pleasant to us on account of many delicate associations. In them the queen Menaka stands with arms out-stretched, and Uma comes to her with her sons and daughters—the scene suggesting the sufferings of the whole year. But old Siva, it must be remembered, is the Great God. He can, at his will, assume a young and handsome appearance and Uma, inspite of her yearnings to meet her mother, is a devoted wife. Siva, beggar and eater of intoxicating drugs though he is, is tenderly devoted to Uma. He cannot bear separation from her. When she goes to her father's house, there in the picture, the Great God follows her above, through the skies, with looks indicating immeasurable love and tenderness, and in the *Agamani* songs, reverence is not wanting for Siva in spite of the humble characteristics attributed to him. Here is a song in which queen Menaka says :—

Reverence for Siva. The character of a *Yogi* retained in the songs.

"O Himavat, I have this desire in my heart. Let me bring my daughter with my son-in-law and give them a home in this mountainous region. He will be here my adopted son, and this mountain,— capital of ours will be a second Kailasa (the abode of Siva). I shall see my Uma and Siva for all the twelve months of the year and the pain of my heart will be assuaged. My son-in-law is ever contented. It is so easy to please him! If I offer him the flower *Kunda* and leaves of *Bel*, he will make this place his home and will not wish to go away."*

* গিরি আমার মনে এই বাসনা।
আমি জামাতা সহিতে আনিব দুহিতে
গিরিপুরে করব শিবস্থাপনা।

Yet every one knows, while hearing or singing such songs, that Siva cannot be bound to any earthly object. He is addicted to nothing; it is his compassion, that people mistake for love. He cares not for either raiment or food,—his contentment springs from within. He is absorbed in contemplation, he is immaculate and above all desire. Uma tries to bind him by a thousand ties of affection. But home and the funeral ground to him are alike—he aims at the superior delight which is derived from *Yoga*.

Uma the housewife.

The domestic element in the descriptions of Siva lends a charm to Siva-songs in Bengali. Uma in Kailasa plays the housewife, the perfect prototype of the Hindu wife, ever accustomed to patient and strenuous self-denial and labour, cheerfully borne for the sake of others. Her highest delight lies in distributing food to her husband, children and servants. She herself eats nothing till everyone in the house, nay every guest has been satisfied; but this pleasure of serving others while fasting herself invests her with a heavenly charm,—which is indicated in the following passage quoted from Sivayana by Ramesvara* :—

A passage from Rameśvara's Śivayana.

ঘরজামাই করি রাখব কৃত্তিবাস,
গিরিপুরী করব দ্বিতীয় কৈলাস।
হরগৌরীরূপ হেরব বারমাস॥
ঘুচে যাবে আমার মনের যাতনা,
জামাই আশুতোষ,—অল্পেতে সন্তোষ,
কুন্দ বিল্বদলে পরম সন্তোষ।
ভুলে রবে ভোলা যেতে চাবে না॥ Old song.

* তিন ব্যক্তি ভোক্তা একা অন্ন দেন সতী।
এই দিতে এই নাই, হাঁড়ি পানে চায়॥
শঙ্কা খেয়ে ভোক্তা চায় হস্ত দিয়া নাকে।
অন্নপূর্ণা অন্ন আন রুদ্রমূর্ত্তি ডাকে॥
গুহগণপতি ডাকে অন্ন আন মা।
হৈমবতী বলে বাছা ধৈর্য্য হয়ে খা॥

"With his two sons Siva sits down to dine. Three sit to eat and Uma serves food to them. As soon as she has served food, the plates are emptied and they look into the cooking pot. Padmavati (the maid of Uma) observes how eagerly Siva eats and smiles. *Sukta* (the first curry) is finished and they fall upon broth. Meantime the plates are all emptied of rice and they all want more 'Mother!' says Kartika, 'give us rice' and Ganesa also repeats the request, while the Lord of Destruction (Siva) says—'Oh Uma bring more rice.' Uma says to her sons, 'My darlings, be patient.' Ganesa becomes silent at these words of his mother but Siva suggests a joke to Kartika who says—'Our father and mother are *Raksasas*. We know only how to eat and know not how to be patient.' Uma smiles and distributes rice. Ganesa says, 'I have finished my curry, what more have you in store?' Hastily she comes and serves ten different kinds of fried food. Siva is much pleased and praises her for her good cooking. The fried *Dhutura* fruit and cups of *Siddhi* are given to the Great God and he nods his head in approval as he sips. When all the curries are finished, they all call at the same time for more; Uma comes hastily to fill their plates and the wind playfully catches her draperies. The musical *Nupura* tinkles sweetly on her feet as she goes rapidly to and fro and her bracelets

মুষকী বাহের বাক্যে মৌনী হয়ে রয়।
শঙ্কর শিখায়ে দেন শিখিধ্বজ কয়।
রাক্ষস জনক, জন্ম রাক্ষসীর পেটে।
যত পাব তত খাব ধৈর্য্য হবে বটে॥
হাসিয়া অভয়া অন্ন বিতরণ করে।
ঈষদুষ্ণ সুপ দিল বেসারীর পরে॥
লম্বোদর বলে শুন নগেন্দ্রের ঝী।
সুপ হল সাঙ্গ আন আর আছে কি॥
ঝড়বড়ি দেবী এনে দিলা ভাজা দশ।
খেতে খেতে গিরীশ গৌরীর গান যশ॥
সিদ্ধিফল কোমল ধুতরা ফল ভাজা।
মুখে ফেলে মাথা নাড়ে দেবতার রাজা॥
দিতে নিতে গতায়াতে নাহি অবসর।
শ্রমে হল সজল কোমল কলেবর॥

sound in harmony with them. She finds it hard to serve so many. The drops of sweat look like pearls on her beautiful face. As a skilful dancing girl moves gracefully to the sound of the musical instruments, so does Uma move briskly about while serving food to her lord and children. She next serves *Payasa* (pudding) of pleasant flavour, and then a sauce both sweet and sour. Her hair becomes dishevelled, and her dress grows loose. With sweetmeats of milk and rice, the dinner ends."

A prayer for shell-bracelets and the sequel.

The domestic element again becomes pathetic in the description of Uma's wanting a pair of shell-bracelets from her husband. Her lord says that he is too poor to give them and a quarrel ensues, the sequel of which is that Uma sets out in anger for her father's home. Siva then disguises himself as a bracelet-maker and goes to his father-in-law's house. There, with tears and begging of forgiveness on both sides, the devoted pair are reconciled and once more brought together.

Poems in honour of Siva.

A considerable part of the Sunya-Purana, to which we have already referred, consists of songs about Siva and these dating from the ninth century or thereabout form the oldest specimens of Saiva-literature that we possess. Of other poems in honour of this god, which have come down to us, we notice some below:—

(2) Sivayana by Ram Krisna, a voluminous poem.

(3) Mriga-Vyadha-Samvada by Ram Raj.

(4) Mriga-Vyadha-Samvada by Syama Ray.

(5) Mrigalubdha by Ratiram. (This poet was a Brahmin and a native of Sumha Dandi in Chittagong. He composed the poem in 1674 A.D.)

ইন্দুমুখে বিন্দু বিন্দু ঘর্ম্ম বিন্দু সাজে।
মৌক্তিকের শ্রেণী যেন বিদ্যুতের মাঝে॥
ঘরবাজে সুপথে নর্ত্তকী যেন ফিরে।
সুরস পায়স দিল পিষ্টকের পরে॥
খসিল কাঁচলি এলায়ে গেল কেশ।
গব্য বিতরণ কৈল দ্রব্য হৈল শেষ॥

(6) Siva Chaturdasi by Raghu Ram.

(7) Vaidyanath Mangal by Sankara Kavi Chandra, composed in the 17th century.

(8) Sivayana by Ramesvara. This is a voluminous work and was written about 1750 A.D. Ramesvara was appointed by Rajah Yasovanta Sinha of Karnagarh to write his Sivayana. It enjoys great popularity. The poet was a native of Yadupur near the police station of Ghatal in the district of Midnapur where a zemindar named Hemayata Sinha oppressed him so greatly that he was obliged to leave his ancestral home and settle at Karnagarh in the same district. Ramesvara belonged to the Radhiya Brahmin class. His father was one Laksmana Chakravarti and his mother's name was Rupavati.

Of all the poems in honour of Siva—This Sivayana by Ramesvara enjoys the greatest popularity. It was published by the Vangavasi Press of Calcutta some years ago, and a portion of it, called *Vagdinir Pala*, is re-issued from the Bat-tala presses every year, a large number of copies being bought by the common people.

Though the number of poems dealing with Siva exclusively is comparatively small, yet there are many others which treat of his marriage with Uma and their domestic life in detail. Such incidental descriptions of Siva and Uma are found in all the Chandi Mangalas, in the Ramayana by Krittivasa, in the Manasa Mangal by Vijaya Gupta, and in many other old Bengali poems in which they might be least expected. This of course shows that they are relatively older.

Incidental descriptions of Siva and Uma in other poems.

4. *The Sakta-cult and its development in Bengal*

The idea of the femininity of God may have been characteristic of primitive Asiatic races—of Mongolians and Dravidians in particular, whose civilization, according to some scholars, preceded that of the Aryans. In the

God as mother.

Vedas which represent the pure creed of the Indo-Aryans before it had any admixture of the religion of the primitive races of India,—we do not find any pronounced worship of god as mother. But the whole country was full of such worship and the Aryan settlers had ere long to recognise and adopt it. We find in the Tantras * that some forms of the Sakta-cult were imported into the religious system of the Aryans from China.

The great war between Chandi and Mahisasura is said to have occurred in the earliest part of the Satya-Yuga. The Hindus thus give it a date anterior to any event related in their own history, though there is no mention of this war in the Vedas. This fact is suggestive of the origin of the worship of the mother in a very primitive age and the non-mention of it in their earliest literature —the Vedas, only leads to the hypothesis, that it did not originally interest the Aryans.

The great war between Chandi and Mahisasura.

But the Aryans could not help adopting this creed in their religious worship after they had settled in the country for some time, because it had such a wide-spread influence and also because by its great tenderness, this faith is, religiously extremely attractive. When the Sakta-cult thus came to be recognised by the Indo-Aryans, they raised it into a highly refined and spiritual faith, Sanskritised its vocabulary and Aryanized its modes of worship.

Sakta cult was latterly recognised.

But this worship took centuries to reach such a state—Delai Chandi, Lakhai Chandi, Vasuli, Thakurani—are some of the non-Sanskritic names of the Mother as worshipped in different localities—which still remind us of the primitive faith of the people, before they came in contact with the Aryan civilization. The worship of the snake-goddess and of Chandi once prevailed in all parts of the ancient world and recent discoveries made in Crete by Dr. Evans attest that it existed there as early as 3000 B.C.

Some of the non-Sanskritic names of the Mother.

* The Rudra-Yamala and other Hindu Tantras

But though Sakti-worship was recognised early,—the local divinities in all parts of India could not receive similar recognition and homage from the Indo-Aryan settlers without a great struggle—especially as the worship of these deities had much in it that was crude and unfit for admission by Hindus into their organised cults. The Saivism, which was the earlier of the two to become an organized creed, had great fight with the creed of the people believing in various forms of the mother-worship. Bengali Literature begins, so to speak, with this account of a fight between the Saivas and the worshippers of those local deities who claimed to be Sakti, but whom the worshippers of Siva called witches and regarded as quite unworthy of worship. At a later time the Saiva creed was blended with the Sakti-cult even in its crude local forms, but this could not happen before a hard contested fight on either side.

The local divinities were not recognised without a struggle.

This chapter will concern itself with the history of such struggle and the gradual elaboration of these local cults under the shadow of a clearly organized doctrine of the relation between Siva and Sakti.

(a) *Poems in honour of Manasa Devi*

In Chaitanya Bhagavata, a work written in 1536, we find it mentioned that many people at the time took pride in worshipping Manasa Devi, the snake-goddess. The songs in honour of this deity may be traced back, as I have said, to a very early period and they have a wide circulation all over Bengal, especially in the East where the earliest writer of these songs, Hari Datta lived. The great respect, commanded by this deity in the lower Gangetic valley, is not difficult to explain. The plains of Bengal, especially the portions adjoining the sea, are infested with snakes, and deaths from snake-bite during the rainy season become so common as to cause considerable alarm to the people. The

cottages of the poor villagers offer no protection to them from the venomous enemy and when the floods come upon the mud-hovels and thatched roofs, snakes and other venomous reptiles take shelter there, and are not infrequently discovered hidden in beds or coiled up in pitchers and other household utensils. The poor people have no means of cutting down the jungles and keeping the village-paths clear. In their utter helplessness they are driven to take refuge in God. The God of the snakes is also the God of men and by propitiating Him they hope to avert the danger with which unaided they cannot cope. A consolation comes to them surely when thus resigned to His mercy.

The fear of snakes.

The goddess Manasa Devi who represents the divine power as seen in snakes has been a popular deity from very early times, but before her worship was recognised as a form of Sakti-worship, the followers of the Saiva religion offered a great resistance to it, as indeed they did to the worship of all other local deities of the later Sakta-cult. The history of the struggle of the Saivas with the worshippers of Sakti, which was long protracted, is shrouded in the dark past. The flowers offered to Sakti as *Asoka* and *Java* for instance, are not acceptable to the great Siva even now when that strife is over. The heroic firmness with which Chand Sadagar, Dhanapati Sadagar and other followers of Siva adhered to their faith and offered resistance to the spread of the worship of the local deities of the Sakta-cult, found in our old poems, opens a vista through which we have a glimpse of the struggle which at one time split the whole Hindu community of Bengal.

Local deities recognised in the Sakta pantheon after a severe fight with the Saivites.

There is much that is crude in the poems on Manasa Devi and those on Chandi. This, however, proves that they once formed a part of the popular literature of the country before the people had come in contact with the refined classical taste of the Renaissance. The readers will have patiently to go through the manoeuvres

The personal element in the divinities.

and plots formed by the deities that would often appear undignified and unworthy on their part. The propaganda of the Sakta-cult, however, was to restore faith in a personal divinity in the place of the impersonal Siva. All through these poems one is sure to find the mother's heart in the divinities, eager to stretch out protecting hands to those children that cling to them. Into whatever danger a believer may fall, he cries out for the motherly help of the divinity whom he worships in a patient and prayerful spirit, and she is sure to appear to him with anxious solicitude to protect him. Instances of this personal element in the deities are to be found throughout the vast literature of the Saktas. The characters of Srimanta and Kalketu in Chandi Kavya, of Sundara in Vidya Sundara, of Lau Sen in Dharma Mangal, as recast by the Hindu priests, and of Behula in Manasa Mangal, have been all depicted as attaining great success in life by force of their devotion alone. When all resources failed and the great characters were reduced to utmost straits—some of them being doomed to die on the scaffold, they fixed their whole heart on the mother and solicited divine help with tearful eyes, despairing of saving themselves by their own power, and the mother was sure to come to her devotees stretching out the hand of succour.

Chautis.

One of the familiar ways adopted by the old Bengali poets in describing such mystic situations was to put in the mouth of a devotee a hymn addressed to her by names beginning with each of the thirty-four letters of the Bengali alphabet. The gods and goddesses in our mythology are often known to their worshippers by hundreds of names and these hymns addressed with 34 names, of which there is quite a legion in our literature, are called *Chautis* (lit. 34).

This idea of a personal divinity as contrasted with that of the impersonal Siva is the predominant feature in the literature of the Sakta cult.

In the month of *Sravana* (July-August) the villages of Lower Bengal present a unique scene. This is the time when Manasa Devi is worshipped. Hundreds of men in Sylhet, Backergunge and other districts throng to the river-side or to the temples to recite the songs of Behula. The vigorous boat-races attending the festivity and the enthusiasm that characterises the recitation of these songs cannot but strike an observer with an idea of their vast influence over the masses. There are sometimes, a hundred oars in each of the long narrow boats, the rowers singing in loud chorus as they pull them with all their might. The boats move with the speed of an arrow, even flying past the river-steamers. These festivities of Manasa *Puja* sometimes occupy a whole month, during which men keep vigil and recite the songs before the goddess, and are generally known as *Bhasan Yatra*. The wonderful devotion of Behula to her husband is the theme of these songs; and a vast poetic literature has sprung up in Bengal during the last thousand years in commemoration of the events of her life and that of Chand Sadagar who offered defiance to Manasa Devi for long years, yet ultimately was driven by strange circumstances to worship her. How wide-spread is the popularity of these songs in Bengal may be imagined from the fact that the birth-place of Chand Sadagar is claimed by no less than nine districts, all equally proud of the hero of the Manasa-Mangal. It reminds us of the seven cities which disputed the honour of Homer's birth. I may name here some of the places that claim a connection in one shape or another with the chief characters of Manasa-Mangal.

The Bhasan Yatra.

Villages and towns claiming connection with the characters of Manasa-Mangal

(1) Champak Nagar—said to have been the capital of Chand Sadagar, in the district of Burdwan, and close to Champak Nagar is a small river which is called Behula, after the reputed heroine of Manasa-Mangal.

(2) Champak Nagar in Tippera.

(3) Dhubri in Assam. People here believe that Chand was a resident of the place.

(4) Mahasthan in the district of Bogra.

(5) The people of Darjeeling believe that the scene of the Manasa-Mangal was laid on the banks of the river Ranit close by.

(6) Sanaka Gram near Kanta Nagar in the district of Dinajpur; Sanaka was the queen of Chand Sadagar and Sanaka Nagar is believed to have been named after her.

(7) Champai Nagar in the District of Malda.

(8) The *Mela* (exhibition) held in honour of Behula in the District of Birbhum is said to have originated during Behula's life-time.

(9) In Chittagong, there is a spot pointed out as the site of the house of Kalu Kamar—the builder of a steel house for Laksmindara, and there is besides a tank in the place which bears the name of Chand Sadagar.

We give here the story of Manasa Devi :—

The story of Manasa Mangal.

It was ordained by the great god Siva that unless and until Chand Sadagar, the merchant-king of Champak Nagar, worshipped Manasa Devi, her claims to obtain *puja* amongst mortals would not be recognised.

Chand Sadagar's defiance.

At first she tried by gentle persuasion to prevail upon Chand Sadagar to worship her, but the hero of the poems lent a deaf ear to her words. He carried in his hand a huge stick made of *hintal* wood and with it he tried, several times, to assault the goddess. The god whom Chand worshipped was the great Siva. Could he brook the idea of offering flowers at the feet of the deity who merely presided over snakes? He hated her from the bottom of his heart and called her ill-names.

The wrath of the goddess of snakes knew no bounds at this defiant attitude. She determined to revenge herself by some means, fair or foul.

Chand had made a beautiful garden outside the city, which was called "Guabari." He had spent many lakhs of rupees in making it an earthly paradise. Now Manasa Devi commanded her retinue of serpents to destroy this fair garden by their venomous bites. They did so; and lo! this elysium of Chand, so rich in fruit and flowers, was reduced to smoke. The guards in great consternation went to Chand and acquainted him with the fate of his far-famed Guabari. Chand came to the spot and smiled.

Guabari destroyed.

To the wonder of all, there present, he uttered some *mantras* and the garden revived, wearing the fresh hues of its original verdure.

The garden revived

Manasa Devi's plot was thus foiled by Chand, who possessed *Maha Jnan*—a power bestowed by Siva, by which he could give life to the dead and revive all that was destroyed.

Maha Jnan.

It was useless for the goddess to try other experiments. She felt that so long as Chand possessed this power he was practically invincible.

She now appeared before the merchant in the guise of a youthful maiden. The poets who composed the songs have vied with one another in describing the beauty of this celestial maiden. Earthly beauty was as nothing compared to hers; even the moon sank behind the clouds in shame, being smitten by the superior light that emanated from the face of this exquisite creature. Chand fell in love with her at first sight, but the fair maiden would not listen to any proposals from him unless he dispensed with his *Maha Jnan* and bestowed that power on her. The infatuated merchant, not suspecting that she was Manasa Devi in disguise, agreed to her condition; when lo! like a shooting star she vanished from the place, and appearing in the sky in her own form, related the story of her triumph.

The loss of *Maha Jnan*

But though deprived of his great power, Chand was not a whit daunted.

Not a whit daunted

The next step of Manasa Devi was again to destroy the beautiful garden upon which her curse had already fallen so ineffectually.

Chand Sadagar had an intimate friend in the city of Sankoor. He was called Sankoor Garuria. He also possessed *Maha Jnan* and Chand sent a messenger forthwith to fetch him to his palace. The great physician, for such was his calling, came to Champak Nagar and in a moment restored the garden to its original form.

His friend comes to the rescue.

Manasa Devi's attempts were thus frustrated a second time, but her resources were inexhaustible. By a contrivance which for ingenuity and diplomacy may be called a great intellectual feat, she succeeded in killing Sankoor Garuria, the physician and friend of Chand.

Sankoor Garuria is killed.

The latter was now friendless and helpless. Manasa Devi not only did again destroy the Guabari, but the serpents appointed by her also killed one by one all his six sons.

The terrible retaliation.

Sanaka, the queen of the merchant-king, fell on her knees and implored her husband to put an end to this unequal quarrel; for after all Manasa Devi was a goddess and he was a man!

The grief of Sanaka

The six wives of the deceased sons of Chand wore the widow's white *sari*, wiped away the beautiful marks of vermilion from their foreheads, broke their shell-bracelets and filled the house with wild lamentations. But with a firmness which was more than human, he was the more confirmed in his resolution not to worship Manasa Devi. He was, however, greatly troubled by the constant wailings of the women of his house, and also by the unsolicited advice of his friends, who came from distant countries to offer him consolation in his distress. He resolved to undertake a sea-voyage with the intention of escaping for some

Chand undertakes a sea-voyage.

time from his uncongenial surroundings. Seven great ships, headed by 'Madhukar,' the royal vessel, started one fine morning for the great sea and Chand had a very successful voyage; he went as far as Ceylon, and, loading his ships with valuable treasures and feeling once more fresh and lively for the change, was on his way home, when upon the dark waters of the lake Kalidaha, a great storm overtook his ships. This storm was raised by Manasa Devi. The ship "Sea-foam" sank first, next the "King's Darling" and then the "Royal Fish" and so on, till the six ships were all wrecked in the bosom of the lake Kalidaha. But the stately "Madhukar," on board which Chand was, defied all storms and as often as the winds inspired by Manasa Devi tried to overthrow it, it struggled and rose to the surface of the waters like a playful fish.

Manasa Devi sought the aid of Hanuman, the great monkey, immortal through all ages, and with his aid at last succeeded in upsetting this ship also. Chand fell into the great lake and was about to be drowned. Manasa Devi would not, however, allow the victim of her wrath to perish: because unless she was worshipped by him, she could not be recognised amongst men. She threw the great lotus which formed her own seat down into the lake, and it floated near Chand. He was struggling to save himself and at the sight of the *padma* flower, stretched out his arms to catch hold of it as a support; but one of the names of Manasa Devi was Padma and the flower also bore the same name, so he contemptuously turned back, preferring death to her aid. But Manasa Devi now appeared and begged Chand to submit to her. She would in that case pardon him and reward him with all that he had lost, including the lives of his six sons. But Chand said, he could not defile his hand, reserved for the worship of Mahadeva, by offering flowers to the one-eyed goddess of snakes.

The ships are wrecked.

Prefers death to Manasa Devi's aid

Somehow or other the merchant king escaped death, and after three days of severe struggle reached the shore. It was the

beautiful city of his old friend Chandraketu where he touched land. Completely stripped of clothes, as he found himself, he picked up some rags from the cremation-ground, which he wrapped round his waist, and straightway went to his friend's palace. Chandraketu gave him a warm reception, and as the merchant had not tasted any food for three days, he at once ordered a rich repast to be served to him; he also presented him with a valuable attire becoming his rank. When the hungry merchant sat down to dinner, Chandraketu incidentally remarked that it was not well for him to quarrel with Manasa Devi, and in the course of an animated discussion on the point, Chand came to learn that Manasa Devi was the household deity of Chandraketu, and that there was a temple adjoining the palace dedicated to her. On this he would not touch any of the food. In a fit of rage he threw away the clothes presented to him by his friend; and, wearing his former rags again, left Chandraketu's palace, remarking that it was a pity he had entered that cursed abode, but he did not wish longer to disturb a fool in his paradise. He then begged alms from door to door, and when a sufficient quantity of rice and vegetables was collected, went to the river to bathe after carefully placing his little store in a secure place. But Manasa Devi in the meantime sent a large mouse which ate up the grain and vegetabes, and Chand on returning had to appease his hunger by swallowing raw plantain-skins which some children had left by the river-side. He next got admittance to a Brahmin's house in the capacity of a servant, and his master appointed him to reap the harvest in his fields, and pile up the grain. But Manasa Devi created a bewilderment in his brain so that he could not distinguish the grain from the chaff, and threw away the former and piled up the latter. When the Brahmin, his master, saw this, he was very angry and dismissed him at once. He next went with the woodmen to gather wood from

He is warmly received by Chandraketu.

Begs from door to door.

Eats plantain-skins.

Is dismissed from the Brahmin's house.

the neighbouring hills. He knew the quality of wood better than the woodmen. So he collected a large quantity of valuable sandal wood, and was on his way to the market with it. At Manasa Devi's order, however, Hanuman touched with his toe the load which was being carried by Chand. It immediately became so heavy that Chand had to throw it down and go empty-handed. In this plight, when he was moving about the forest like a disconsolate mad man, he could not help cursing Manasa Devi. Now, at this moment some birds had come near the traps placed there by the fowlers to catch them. Being startled by the careless steps of the merchant, they flew away. The fowlers, in great disappointment, came up to Chand, and taking him for a mischievous knave, assaulted him.

Throws down the load of valuable sandal wood.

Is assaulted by the fowlers.

After suffering all imaginable ills at the hands of the infuriated Manasa Devi, Chand was able to return to Champak Nagar, to his own great relief and to the delight of his queen Sanaka.

Returns home.

Soon afterwards another son was born to him. It was a remarkably handsome child, and they called him Laksmindara or favourite of the goddess of wealth. Chand consulted astrologers and they were unanimous in declaring to him privately that the boy was destined to die on the night of his marriage-day, by snake-bite.

Another son born to him.

Doomed to die in early youth.

Chand had now given up all hopes of worldly happiness. Night and day, he worshipped the great Mahadeva and prayed for strength to keep up his determination. Now Laksmindara, who grew to be a most handsome and accomplished prince, came of that age when youths of his caste generally married, and the queen Sanaka sought for a suitable bride for her son. The family priest, Janardan, brought information that in the whole

world there was not another creature in womanly form so lovely and beautiful as Behula—the accomplished daughter of Saha, the merchant of Nichhani Nagar. Behula's face was like a full-blown lotus, her eyes were soft and playful as those of a wild gazelle, her hair wore the tints of summer clouds and when dishevelled, fell down her back and reached the ankles. She sang like a cuckoo and danced better than any dancing-girl in the whole city of Champak Nagar.

Behula, the accomplished daughter of Saha, the merchant.

Chand knew that he would lose his dear son on the marriage-day, yet could not resist the wishes of his poor queen. He built a house of steel on mount Santali, taking precautions that there was no crevice left in it for even a pin to pass through. The steel-house was guarded by armed sentinels; weasels and peacocks were let loose all around it to kill snakes, should they come into its neighbourhood. All kinds of medicinal herbs, which were known to be antidotes to snake-poison and the strong scent of which would make snakes and reptiles shudder and shrink into a corner, were strewn round the house, and snake-charmers and physicians were assembled there from all parts of the world to guard the place against all species of creeping animals.

The steel-house on mount Santali

Manasa Devi paid a visit to the man who had made the steel-house, and asked him to keep an opening in it through which a hair might pass. The builder said that the house was now complete and that he had received wages and rewards from the merchant king; how could he again go there and make an opening? The goddess threatened to kill him and all the members of his family on the spot. So he obeyed. He went back to mount Santali on the pretext of inspecting the building more thoroughly and with a few strokes of his chisel made a small opening which he filled up with powdered coal.

The builder makes an opening.

When Laksmindara was about to set out with the nuptial party for marriage, the bridegroom's crown that he wore, bedecked with jewels and flowers, fell from his head; and this was the first ominous sign.

The first ominous sign.

When the marriage ceremony was being celebrated in the great pavilion which had been built for the occasion, the golden umbrella over the bridegroom's head gave way—the silver rod which supported it, having suddenly broken from some mysterious cause; and this was the second inauspicious sign.

The second one

When Behula, the bride, was being carried round Laksmindara, she carelessly wiped from her forehead with her own hand the sacred vermilion-mark, the sign of the married woman whose husband is living. This was the third inauspicious sign.

The third one.

As soon as the marriage was over, Chand took Laksmindara and Behula to the steel-house on mount-Santali.

The pair taken to the steel-house.

This was the terrible night, when the question of life and death of Laksmindara would be solved; the astrologers had said, if his life could be saved that night, he would live a hundred years.

There Behula and Laksmindara were left to themselves. The coy maiden beheld her husband: the garland of *rangan* flowers, which he wore, hung loosely round his neck touching his right arm and breast,—his silken attire of deep scarlet half covered his handsome person, and Behula looked upon her husband with that feeling of adoration which a Brahmin feels when he approaches his house-hold god. Laksmindara's eyes also drank deep of the beauty of the maiden, and he asked her to come closer to him so that he might embrace her. The bashful maiden would not listen to any such thing—she hid her face with her tender hands and turned away. Fatigued by the labours and fasting required for the marriage ceremony, Laksmindara fell asleep. But Behula,

The couple left to themselves.

though equally fatigued, sat near him on the bed and watched him—for he appeared to her as a priceless treasure and she must not trust too much to her good fortune. After a while, Laksmindara awoke and said to Behula, "My darling, I am very hungry; can you prepare some rice for me?" Saying this he again fell asleep. Behula did not know what to do. How could she prepare rice there? But her resources never failed her. The plate required for the sacred ceremony contained some cocoanuts; there were also rice and some coloured earthen cups there. She took three cocoanuts and made a hearth with them. One earthen cup was filled with the sweet milk of a cocoanut and rice was placed in it. She took a silken robe and with that kindled a fire to prepare the rice. There she sat, like Annapurna, cooking rice for her husband.

Behula cooks rice.

At this moment Manasa Devi called to her all her snakes,—great reptiles and venomous adders,—and asked who would undertake to bite Laksmindara. The difficulties were great, and many hesitated; but the snake Bankaraj, whose poison was as drops of liquid fire, came forward, and obeying the command of the goddess, glided towards mount Santali.

All on a sudden Behula saw that a mysterious opening was being made in the steel wall, and a snake entering the room. She took a cup of milk, with a ripe plantain in it, and offered it to the venomous intruder. The snake stooped low to drink the milk, and Behula, with a golden hook, caught it fast and made it a prisoner. While again watching the cup on which rice was boiling, she saw another snake coming through the same passage. It was the great Uday-nag with fiery eyes. Behula made him a prisoner also, following the same device; and after a while the snake Kaladanta shared in the same way the fate of its predecessors. Then for some time nothing more was seen; the rice was ready and she called to her husband to rise and partake of the meal. But Laksmindara was fast asleep and did not respond.

A mysterious opening and a snake.

The snake Uday-nag.

The snake Kaladanta.

Fatigued with labour, fast and vigil, Behula at this moment felt an irresistible inclination to sleep. She sat beside her husband with her eyes still fixed on the mysterious crevice in the wall. The three serpents lay under a large pot and could not stir. Behula's eyes became closed in sleep but at times opened wide, gazing at the small opening. Towards the last watch of the night when everything was still and when even the rustling sound of leaves was not heard in that mountainous region, Behula yielded to the fatal influence of sleep and reclining on a pillow near the feet of her husband, lay like a flower innocent and beautiful.

Behula sleeps.

Now came Kalnagini, that snake who had destroyed the Guabari, and killed Chand's eldest son Sridhar, and approached with the speed of lightning the bed of Laksmindara. At this very moment the sleeping prince touched the snake with his foot and it at once turned and bit him in the toe. Laksmindara cried out. "Ho daughter of the merchant Saha, dost thou sleep ? I am dying of a snake's bite !" Behula rose from the bed and perceived the snake passing out swiftly through the opening in the wall.

The fatal bite.

Laksmindara died. The next moment the sun rose, shedding its golden hues over the mountain-forests and the birds began to sing blithely on the wild trees. Queen Sanaka with her maids of honour came to the house and saw a most heart-rending sight. Prince Laksmindara lay there dead, and the widowed girl was sobbing over him. With dishevelled hair, she was bending over the departed prince. Sanaka swooned, and the maids said—"Oh luckless wretch, it is to thine evil fortune we owe this crushing bereavement. The vermilion-marks on thy brow have not lost their lustre,—they have still a deep scarlet hue, the tint of *alakta* on thy feet is yet unsoiled by dust, thy marriage-attire of silk is as fresh as new, and yet thou art already a widow ! No snake could have done this, it is thy breath that has extinguished the life's fire in the prince, wretch that thou art." Behula did not hear these reproaches ; for her

The luckless bride.

mind was working on far other themes. The prince had asked her to embrace him, he had asked her to prepare rice for him the first and the last requests of one who was all in all to her! How unfortunate was she that she had not been able to fulfil these wishes! At this recollection the tears again flowed from her eyes unceasingly.

The body of Laksmindara was taken to the burning ghat. But Behula insisted that it should not be burnt. The custom in the country in cases of snake-bite was to place the corpse on a raft made of plantain stems called a *bhela* and leave it on the river, in the hope that the skill of a physician or a snake-charmer might bring it back to life. Behula's arguments were appreciated, and a raft of plantain-stems was prepared. The corpse of the prince was placed on it, and it was floated on the river Gangoor. At this moment, to the wonder of all there assembled, Behula herself stepped on the raft and sat down beside the corpse, expressing her intention to accompany her husband's body over the waters and not to leave it until it should be restored to life.

Behula on the raft with the corpse.

They called her a mad woman who had lost her senses under the great shock received immediately after her marriage, and entreated her to return home. The maidens, who had so bitterly reproached her, were now sorry for her misfortune and tenderly said how very foolish it would be for a woman of her youth to set out for unknown regions with a corpse. Where was it ever heard that a dead man was restored to life! But she sat like a fairy or an angel watching over the dead prince with eyes full of infinite affection and infinite sorrow. The queen maddened with grief lamented bitterly and begged the beautiful girl to desist from her foolish intention. Behula only said, "Adored mother, you will find the rice I prepared in the golden plate in the steel-house on mount Santali. There the lamp is still burning. Go, mother, cease weeping, and close the door of that room. So long as that rice remains fresh and that lamp burns, know that my hopes of

Her unshaken resolve.

restoring my husband to life will not be abandoned." The people of Champak Nagar, who had all assembled there, shed tears and cried, "Oh honoured lady, adopt not this mad course!" Behula only said, "Nay, bless me, sirs, that I may have my husband restored to me once more!"

The raft passed swiftly down the stream and Champak Nagar soon vanished out of sight. The news reached her father's house, and her five brothers, of whom Hari Sadhu was the eldest, came to the river side to take her back to their home. The brothers wept bitterly as they saw the forlorn girl sitting beside a corpse, and said, "We will burn the corpse of the prince with sandal wood, alight on shore. Though you cannot wear shell-bracelets, yet we will give you golden ones; though sacred vermilion will be refused, yet we can adorn your forehead with red powder; though you may not take fish and meat, we will feed you with all kinds of dainties. You are our only sister. You will be adored in our home, come then to the bank! How heartless were these people of Champak Nagar! They felt no compunction at allowing you to accompany a corpse alone on the bosom of deep waters in this condition." Behula could not answer for some time, for tears choked her voice, but when she spoke, she was resolute and firm. She asked them to return and give her respects to her poor parents. She could not bear the idea of living in a world without her husband. Even the dead body of the prince had for her an attraction which nothing else possessed in her eyes. She was determined to restore it to life.

The brothers went away overwhelmed with grief, and poor Behula, fasting and sorrowing over her lot, went on over the waters,—she herself knew not whither. Wicked men amongst whom the chief were Goda, Dhana and Mana became enamoured of the extraordinary beauty of the devoted creature and tried to carry her away by force, but God, who preserves the children, preserved her also who was equally helpless, and resigned. They could not touch her person.

Preserved from harm.

When she drew near to a place called Bhagher Bak, the corpse began to decompose. Decay set in and the form of the beautiful bridegroom became swollen and rotten; and intolerable stench came out of it and swarms of flies and maggots gathered round the putrid body. Behula saw before her eyes the workings of the immutable law of nature—the end reserved in the normal course for all human beings, and seeing this, she grew indifferent to bodily pain. She washed and cleansed the corpse, she ate nothing, and when her grief was great, she wept alone in that forlorn condition. She passed the *ghat* of Noada and Srigalghata. People came to see her from the neighbouring villages and called her a mad woman who had lost her senses from grief.

The decomposed corpse.

Whence came the strength and hope that sustained her in this distress? She chanted the name of Manasa Devi a hundred thousand times a day and remained absorbed in prayer, till her body became inert and motionless. Pale and emaciated with the dear relics of the prince's body by her side, she suffered intensely. In dark nights the winds rose and crocodiles gathered round her raft, eager to devour the decomposed body. Jackals also came to carry it off whenever the raft drew near the banks, but she was preserved by Providence from their attacks.

The force of prayer.

Being completely resigned, in her extraordinary devotion to Manasa Devi, and passing through unheard-of sufferings, she felt that a power was growing in her, which she could not define, but could feel nevertheless to be more than human. Sometimes she saw the evil spirits of the air in horrid shapes dissuading her with threats and menaces from her extraordinary course, at others angelic faces peeped through the sky trying to win her to a life of ease and luxury, but she sat like a marble statue, unmoved either by fear or by temptation—sounding the very depths of suffering and praying with unfaltering faith for the life of her dear husband.

Completely resigned.

Six months passed in this way; the boat touched the *ghat* of Neta, the washer-woman of the gods; and in the fine morning air when she came there, Behula saw Neta washing clothes on the bank of the river Gangoor. Behula felt that she was no human being, for her head was encircled by a halo of light. A beautiful child was teasing her as she washed, and to the wonder of Behula, she strangled the child and kept it beside her.

Neta strangles her child.

Behula said nothing, but sat on her raft by the skeleton of her husband, silently watching this mysterious woman.

When, however, the last rays of the sun faded from the western sky, Neta sprinkled a few drops of water over the face of the child, and lo! it smiled as if just awakened from sleep.

The child comes back to life.

Neta was just about to ascend to the divine regions with the clothes and the child, when Behula landed and fell at her feet weeping. She uttered no word, but shed unceasing tears.

Behula and Neta.

Neta raised her from the ground and assured the unfortunate maid that she would carry her to the heavenly regions where the gods might be moved to grant her prayer.

There in high heaven Behula was ordered to dance before the assembled gods, and she did her part so well that the gods were mightily pleased, and Manasa Devi was requested by them to restore Laksmindara to life. Manasa Devi complied with this request after having extorted a promise from Behula that she would induce her father-in-law to worship her. Manasa Devi was pleased with her devotion and wished to know if she had any other boon to ask. With clasped hands and tearful eyes, she said, "The sight of my widowed sisters-in-law will pain me, Divine mother! In your mercy restore my husband's brothers to life." This Manasa Devi did and further rewarded her by giving back the seven ships loaded with treasures, which Chand had lost in the waters of Kalidaha. The Guabari of Chand was also restored to its original condition.

Manasa Devi grants all that Behula seeks.

On her way home.

Behula embarked with her husband and his brothers on board the ships and started homewards. She related to her husband the story of her sufferings, pointing to the places of their occurrence as they sailed back up the noble river Gangoor, and her beautiful eyes swam with tears at their recollection. But the heart of Laksmindara was like to break for pain as he listened to the story of all she had endured.

Behula and Laksmindara visit Nichhani Nagar in disguise.

When the ships came near Nichhani Nagar, Behula besought her husband to allow her to pay a flying visit to her poor parents, striken with grief. To this Laksmindara readily consented, saying, "Let us both go there under the guise of a Yogi and Yogini." Behula agreed gladly and immediately adopted the earrings, the ochre-coloured clothes and the knotted hair distinctive of *Yoginis*. Laksmindara took a *kamandalu* in his hand, and covered his beautiful body with ashes like a *Yogi*.

The meeting.

The seeming ascetics passed through Baruipara and other places, and came to the home of Saha, the merchant of Nichhani Nagar. They entered the house by the back-door, and came directly to the inner apartments. At that moment, Amala, the mother of Behula, was coming out of the kitchen with a golden plate full of rice, for the dinner of Hari Sadhu, her eldest son, when the sight of the *Yogi* and *Yogini* made her tremble with grief, the golden plate fell from her hand, and she wailed aloud, "This *Yogini* is just like my Behula!," she could say only this and no more. She ran up to the supposed *Yogini* throwing her arms about her and swooned away. Behula held her mother's head in her arms and tenderly caressed her, weeping profusely. When Amala came to her senses, Behula softly said, "We are come back, mother, once more to your arms. Yonder *Yogi* is your son-in-law restored to life."

To Champak Nagar.

The people of the whole village came to see them, but Behula would not stop there even for a day. She was eager to go back to Champak Nagar, and in spite of their affectionate remonstrances, embarked once

more on board the ship "Madhukar" and started for Champak Nagar that very day.

Behula disguised as a sweeper-girl

When they reached that city, however, she played another trick. She disguised herself as a sweeper-girl. While on her way back from heaven she had employed an artist to prepare a fan bedecked with precious stones in which the pictures of all the members of Chand's family were painted in living colours represented by the natural hues of precious stones

With this fan in her hand, Behula landed on the banks of the river Gangoor. At that very moment her widowed sisters-in-law were coming to carry water, and were attracted by the fan, no less than by the beauty of the sweeper-girl. While examining the fan closely, they were struck with wonder to see the likenesses of the members of their own family painted upon the fan. They wanted to know who this sweeper-girl was and what she meant to do with the fan. Behula said that she was called Behula, the sweeper-girl, her husband's name was Laksmindara, the sweeper, and his father's name was Chand, the sweeper, and her own father's name was Saha, the sweeper. The fan was for sale, and its price was one lakh of rupees.

At this strange story the widows wept and went speedily home to acquaint queen Sanaka with what they had seen and heard. Sanaka ran to the house of steel and to her surprise found the lamp still burning and the rice still fresh on the golden plate. Then she came to the bank of the river and seeing the pictures on the fan and the face of the sweeper-girl, which reminded her of Behula, she fell to the earth and began to rend the air with loud lamentations. Behula then said, "Mother, do not weep. Look at your sons. Manasa Devi has restored them to life. But we cannot enter Champak Nagar until my father-in-law worships Manasa Devi. So I have brought all of you here by a device."

Once more the seven sons stood near their sorrow-stricken parents, and the tears that were shed were holy, for Behula's

wonderful devotion more than anything else caused them to flow.

Chand worships Manasa Devi.

Chand could not resist all this. Events had been too much for him. He saw in the sweet and resigned countenance of Behula that Manasa Devi's victory was complete, and that it would be impossible for him to resist the appeal silently expressed in the eyes of his beloved daughter-in-law.

Chand worshipped Manasa in the month of Sravana on the 11th day of the waning moon. Some say that he offered flowers to Manasa Devi with his left hand as a mark of contempt, turning his face away from her all the while. But however this be, Manasa Devi was pleased and granted him wealth and prosperity. His friend, Sankoor Garuria was restored to life.

Behula and Laksmindara, who were Usha and Aniruddha in Heaven, and had been obliged to take a mortal frame under a curse, went back after a while to their celestial home.

Manasa Devi's claims to obtain *puja* among mortals have ever since been an established fact.*

Sixty works on Manasa Devi. Their importance.

About sixty works on Manasa Devi, written by different writers at various times, but all before the 18th century, have been brought to light by the researches of scholars within the last 15 years. Vijay Gupta's work, published by the Adarsa Press of Backergunge in 1896, contains 232 pages (royal octavo) printed in double columns. It contains 15,000 lines and exceeds Milton's Paradise Lost by half its bulk. Many of the other works referred to above are equally voluminous. Some of them contain graphic accounts of the sea voyage of Chand Sadagar and descriptions of the manner in which commercial enterprises were undertaken by the Bengalis in ancient times, with incidental

* Originally written for the *Modern Review* from which the story is now reprinted.

references to the flourishing condition of Bengal and her industry. The geographical notices of places, the names of which are to be found in many of these works, bear witness to the changes constantly brought about in the plains of the Gangetic valley by its ever-shifting river-courses.

Hari Datta, the earliest writer of these songs.

The earliest writer on Manasa Devi in Bengal was Hari Datta who was blind of one eye. We have come across only 20 lines of his composition. They describe the ornaments made of snakes which decorated the person of Manasa Devi. Hari Datta was born in the district of Mymensingh and probably lived in the 12th century. We have come across a description of him in a later poem written by Vijay Gupta in honour of Manasa Devi. Manasa Devi is said to have appeared before Vijay Gupta in a dream and said :—

The defects of his poems.

"An illiterate man first wrote a poem in my honour; but he had no idea of my power and glory. He was Hari Datta, the one-eyed. His irregular and metreless doggerel became obsolete and were lost in course of time. His words were vulgar, his lines did not rhyme and his songs had no merit by which to attract the people. The singers tried to please by rude gestures and clownish leaps."*

He probably lived in the 12th century.

Vijay Gupta's work was written in 1484, when Hari Datta's poems, once so popular, had already grown obsolete. The ungracious references, made to his deficiencies in metre and rhyme and to a preponderance of rude words in his poems, only prove them to

* মূর্খে রচিল গীত না জানে মাহাত্ম্য।
প্রথমে রচিল গীত কাণা হরিদত্ত॥
হরিদত্তের যত গীত লুপ্ত হৈল কালে।
যোড়াগাঁথা নাহি কিছু ভাবে মোরে ছলে॥
কথার সঙ্গতি নাই নাহিক সুস্বর।
এক গাইতে আর গায় নাই বিত্রাক্ষর॥
গীতে মতি না দেয় কিছু মিছা বাড় ফাল।
দেখিয়া শুনিয়া মোর উপজে বেতাল॥
Vijay Gupta's Padma Purana.

be antiquated specimens of the earliest form of written Bengali. We may, on these grounds, safely declare Hari Datta to have lived a few centuries before Vijay Gupta. We are inclined to place him in the 12th century A.D.

Vijay Gupta.

Vijay Gupta's Manasa Mangal is one of the most popular works of its class. In Eastern Bengal, especially in the district of Backergunge, it is esteemed sacred and always read on the occasion of the worship of Manasa Devi. There they call poems about Manasa Devi, Rayani. This word is a corruption of the word Rajani or night, and the word Jagarana which is often used for these songs, means vigil. These facts imply that poems about Manasa Devi used to be recited during the night.

Rajani and Jagarana.

This happens during the whole of the Bengali month of Sravana.

Fullasri—the native village of the poet.

Vijay Gupta was born in the year 1448 in the village of Fullasri in the district of Backergunge. The pot with which he worshipped Manasa Devi is still preserved there in the temple dedicated to the goddess. Fullasri is a well-known village, and is the birth-place of many scholars whose names are not unfamiliar to the literary world. Kavindra Trilochana Das, Janaki Nath Kavikanthahara, Bhavani Nath Das Sarasvati, Raghu Ram Das Kanthabharana and Kavikarnapura were all inhabitants of this particular village and Vijay Gupta with just pride speaks of it as Pandit Nagar or City of Scholars. Here are some of his opening lines :—

Opening lines.

" In Saka 1406 (1484 A.D.) Husen Shah is the Emperor of Gauda, and Raja Arjuna as the morning sun of war rules Muluk Fateabad (the modern Faridpur and a part of Backergunge) which extends up to Bangrora. On the west lies the river Ghagara, on the east

ছাপাশুক্লবেদশশীপরিমিত শক।
সনাতন হুসেন সাহ নৃপতি তিলক॥

the river Ghanteswar, and between them the village of Fullasri, the city of scholars. Brahmins versed in four Vedas and Vaidyas skilled in their own Sastras, and Kayasthas who are expert-writers, all live in this place. Whosoever dwells in this blessed spot has a share in its glory. In such a place is the home of Vijay." Ghanteswar and Ghagara have both been silted up, though traces of them may yet be discovered and the site of the village Fullasri has become changed in course of time. The more important part of the village is now called Gaila.

Vijay Gupta belonged to the Vaidya caste, his father's name being Sanatana and his mother's, Rukmini.

The contents of his Manasa Mangal.

His Manasa Mangal is divided into the following cantos :—

1. Consultation.
2. Hymns to the gods.
3. Dreams.
4. The garden house of Chand.
5. Birth of Manasa Devi.
6. An introductory notice of Manasa Devi.
7. The lamentations of Chandi.
8. The beginning of the quarrel with Chand.
9. Quarrel with Chandi.
10. Chandi restored to consciousness.
11. Marriage of Manasa Devi.

উত্তরে অর্জ্জুনরাজা প্রতাপেতে যম।
মুলুক ফতেয়াবাদ বঙ্গরোড়া তক সীম॥
পশ্চিমে ঘাঘর নদী পূর্ব্বে ঘণ্টেশ্বর।
মধ্যে ফুলশ্রী গ্রাম পণ্ডিতনগর॥
চারিবেদধারী তথা ব্রাহ্মণসকল।
বৈদ্য জাতি বৈসে তথা শাস্ত্রেতে কুশল॥
কায়স্থজাতি বৈসে তথা লিখিতে প্রচুর।
আর যত জাতি নিজ শাস্ত্রেতে চতুর॥
স্থান গুণে যেই জন্মে সেই গুণময়।
হেন ফুলশ্রী গ্রামে নিবসে বিজয়॥

Vijay Gupta's Padma Purana.

12. Separation from her husband.
13. Birth of eight snakes.
14. The churning of the sea.
15. Curse of Siva on Manohara, the cow.
16. Necter produced by churning.
17. Siva loses his senses by swallowing poison.
18. Siva restored to his senses.
19. Manasa Devi exiled to the forest.
20. Manasa Devi worshipped by the shepherds.
21. The story of Hasan Husen.
22. Chand's birth under the curse of Padma.
23. The insult offered to Sanaka.
24. The destruction of the Guabari (garden of Chand).
25. Manasa Devi disguised as a milk-maid.
26. A heated discussion between Manasa Devi and the disciples of Sankar Garuria.
27. Manasa Devi makes friendship with Kamala, the wife of Sankara Garuria.
28. The story of a chaste woman.
29. Death of Sankara Garuria.
30. The destruction of Chand's garden.
31. The Mahajnan or knowledge by which life can be restored, is lost.
32. Manasa Devi kills the six sons of Chand.
33. Manasa Devi is worshipped in the house of a fisherman.
34. Usha abducted by Aniruddha.
35. Manasa Devi's fight with the king of death (Yama).
36. Chand undertakes a commercial tour.
37. Trade by barter.
38. The distress of Chand.
39. Fourteen ships of Chand destroyed.
40. Chand introduces himself.
41. Birth of Laksmindara.
42. Manasa Devi disguised as an ant.
43. The building of the house of steel.

44. Manasa Devi's conversation with Taravati.
45. Laksmindara sets out for his marriage.
46. The gods attend the marriage ceremony.
47. The canopy falls.
48. Laksmindara sets out for home.
49. Eight snakes made prisoners.
50. A message sent to the serpent Kali.
51. Kali goes to bite Laksmindara.
52. Laksmindara is bitten.
53. His dying words.
54. The dream of Behula.
55. The lamentations of Behula and of Sanaka.
56. A white crow bears the message to Ujani.
57. Hari Sadhu marches to meet his sister Behula.
58. The interview.
59. Dom ghat.
60. Dhana and Mana ghats.
61. The *ghat* of a knave.
62. Neta comes as a tiger and a vulture.
63. The washerwoman's *ghat*.
64. Behula dances before Siva.
65. Padma sent to Manasa Devi.
66. Their meeting.
67. Grievances of the past twelve months.
68. Laksmindara and his brothers restored to life and the ships recovered.
69. Sankar Garuria restored to life.
70. Behula returns home.
71. The *ghats* of Neta, of a knave, of Dhana and Mana, of a man with elephantiasis, and of Hari Sadhu.
72. Behula disguised as a sweeper-girl.
73. The trial of Behula.
74. The meeting.
75. Manasa Devi worshipped.
76. The ascent into heaven (of Behula and Laksmindara).

These chapter-headings roughly indicate the contents of other poems on the same subject also. The literature in honour of Manasa Devi is vast and varied and is interesting from many different points of view. We have, however, no space to consider all these points with that thoroughness which they deserve.

Narayana Deva.

Contemporary with Vijay Gupta was Narayana Deva, another poet who lived in Boragram in the sub-division of Kishoreganj in the district of Mymensingh. The Manasa Mangal of Narayana Deva is almost as popular as that of Vijay Gupta in Eastern Bengal though a greater sanctity is attached to the latter's poem, owing to the preservation of his worship-pot in the village temple of Fullasri. Narayana Deva belonged to the Kayastha caste. His father was Narasimha Deva. The ancestors of the poet were originally inhabitants of Magadha. Latterly they came down to Rarh Desa (West Bengal) and settled there. From Rarh they made another move and settled in Mymensingh. Some descendants of Narayana Deva still dwell in Boragram, being 17th in descent from the poet.

Narayana Deva's poetry.

Narayana Deva was a fine poet. The following passage will show something of his pathos: Behula is lamenting for the death of Laksmindara :*—

Behula laments.

"Where art thou gone, my lord, without me? Awake beloved, lift up thine eyes and look upon thy Behula. Alas! that beauty which shone so bright, putting the sun and moon to shame, has been stolen away by the bite of Kali, the snake. My *Sari* of silk must now be torn off, my bracelets of shell must now be broken, and I, unfortunate that

* অমৃত সমান প্রভুরে তোমার মুখের বাণী।
পুনরপি না শুনিলাম মুই অভাগিনী।
হাতের শঙ্খ ভাঙ্গিব কঙ্কণ করিব চুর।
মুছিয়া ফেলিব আমি সীঁথির সিন্দুর।
এ হেন সুন্দর রূপ প্রভুরে প্রকাশিত রজনী।
চন্দ্র সূর্য্য জিনিয়া রূপ হরিল নাগিনী।
চাঁপার কলিকা সম প্রভুরে তোমার কোমল অঙ্গুলি।
তুমি আমার প্রভুরে—অভাগী বেহুলারে ডাক চাহ চক্ষু মেলি

I am, must wipe off the vermilion from my forehead. Oh my lord! how long will you sleep! Will you not wake and speak to me? Will you not look again at my face? Oh! what fault have I committed against you, that you should make me wretched for ever! To whose care have you left your miserable Behula?"

Again, Behula is on the raft with the body of her husband, and her brother Narayani Sadhu is trying to dissuade her from the insane course she is following* :—

Narayani entreats her to return home.

"Hearing Behula's words, Narayani Sadhu, her brother, says, 'Why do you, O sister, follow a wild fancy that could never be carried into practice? How did such an idea seize you? Where was it ever heard that gods and men can meet? Allow me, O sister, to burn your dead husband. How can you all alone reach heaven, the abode of the gods? How can we let you drift out to sea? Where is the abode of the gods that you would reach? With precious sandal and scented bark I will burn Laksmindara's corpse and perform here the ceremony of his funeral. Come back, O sister, to your childhood's home. You may fast like a widow, but we shall feed you with every dainty. Your shell-bracelets may be broken, and the vermilion gone from your head. This is no matter! for we shall give you other and

* নারায়ণী শুনি বোলে বিপুলা বচন।
কি কারণে কৈলা ভইন অশঙ্কা কথন॥
বিষম সাহস ভইন কৈলা কি কারণ।
দেবতা মনিষ্য কোথা হইছে দরশন॥
আজ্ঞা দেহ ভইন মোরা পুড়িবারে।
একেশ্বর কেমনে যাইবা দেবঘরে॥
কেমতে ছাড়িয়া দিমু সাগর ভিতর।
কথাতে পাইবা তুমি দেবের নগর॥
আগোরি চন্দন কাটে লখাই পুড়িমু।
লক্ষিন্দর কর্ম্ম ভইন এই খানে করিমু॥
নেউটিয়া চল ভইন আপনার ঘরে।
একেশ্বর কেমতে যাইবে দেবঘরে॥

richer ornaments to wear. When my mother asks me about you, how can I tell her that we left her Behula drifting on the water?' At this point the brother's emotion overcomes him; Behula to soothe him, said—'But I have come here determined to restore my husband's life, and you ask me to leave him to be devoured by the beasts of prey that live in the water? Our relations at Champak Nagar would ask me what I have done with his body, and what should I say to them in reply?' Hearing these words Narayani Sadhu, weeping, said, 'Oh sister, I cannot leave you I cannot go. That mad man Chand Sadagar has no proper feeling, his mind has gone astray. He has floated down the living with the dead! On the turbulent river, the waves rise and fall. If you should fall, you will be devoured by sea-fish and shark. O how shall I answer our mother when she asks me about you! What shall I say to our friends in Ujaninagar?' Thus by his lamentations Narayani Sadhu strove to soften her heart, and bring her back to home. The poet Narayana lays down these verses at the feet of Manasa Devi.

Behula's reply.

Narayani laments.

মৎস্যমাংস এড়ি তুইন যত উপহার।
সর্ব্বদ্রব্য দিমু আমি তুমি খাইবার॥
শঙ্খসিন্দূরমাত্র না পরিবা তুমি।
নানা অলঙ্কার তোমা দিমু আমি॥
যাএ জিজ্ঞাসিলে আমি কি দিব উত্তর।
বিপুলা রাখিআ আইলা জলের উপর॥
বিপুলা রাখিতে সাধু করএ ক্রন্দন।
বিপুলাএ গেলে কিছু প্রবোধ বচন॥
জীআইতে আইল প্রভু খাইনু পলাইয়া।
কেমতে মুখত জন্ত দিবাম তুলিয়া॥
অসতী হইব মনিষ্য লোকেতে প্রচার।
কি কারণে এতেক যে রাখিমু খাথার॥
গোত্র জাতি আছে চম্পক নগর।
তারা কি বলিব আমি কি দিব উত্তর॥
বিপুলা শুনিআ বাক্য নিষ্ঠুর বচন।
সকরুণ ভাসে সাধু করএ ক্রন্দন॥

'When, however, having tried every means in his power, he failed to dissuade Behula, then, with a grieved heart he left her, and she bidding farewell to her brother, sailed on and on. The raft flew swiftly like a shooting-star, and she came to a place called the Bagher Bank.'

Behula bids farewell to her brother.

The next Manasa Mangal that we light upon was written by Ksemananda—a Kayastha, who adopted also the name of Ketaka Das. Ketaka occurs in the poem, as a name of Manasa Devi, thus Ketaka Das means 'servant of Manasa Devi.'

Ksemananda.

In his autobiographical notice the poet refers to Bara Khan, as the ruler of Selimabad in the district of Burdwan. Now, this Bara Khan, as we know from other sources, made a deed of gift of twenty bighas of land to one Sivaram Bhattacharyya in the year 1640 A.D. Ksemananda regrets the circumstance that the Khan has been killed in battle. Hence his Manasa Mangal must have been written at some date later than 1640. Ksemananda

সুকবি নারায়ণ দেবের সরস পাচালী।
নারায়ণী করুণা শুন একটি লাচাড়ি॥
কাঁদে নারায়ণী সাধু করএ বিপুলা চাইআ।
প্রাণে না সয় দুঃখ না দিমু এড়িয়া॥
অবুদ্ধিয়া সদাগর বুদ্ধি অতি ছার।
জীয়তা ভাসাইআ দিছে সইতে অবার॥
বিষম সাগরে ঢেউ তোলপার করে।
জলেত পড়িলে খাইব মৎস্য আর মকরে॥
মাএ জিজ্ঞাসিলে আমি কি দিব উত্তর।
কি কথা কহিব আমি উজানী নগর॥
বিপুলা রাখিতে সাধু করএ ক্রন্দন।
নারায়ণ দেবে কহে মনসাচরণ॥
বিস্তর যতন করি রাখিতে না পারিয়া।
চিত্তে ক্ষেমা দিয়া যায় ভেরুআ ভাসাইয়া॥
ভাইত বিদায় করি বিপুলা সুন্দরী।
ছাড়াইয়া আএ তবে ভুয়াখান মেলি॥
নৈখত্রসঞ্চার যেন ভুয়ার চলন।
সম্মুখে বাঘের বাঁকে দিলা দরশন॥

was born in the village of Kanthra in the district of Burdwan and held lands in the *Taluk* of one Oskarna Ray.

Ksemananda's *Manasar Bhasana* contains 5,000 lines, and forms rather a brief verson of the story as compared with other poems on the same subject. But it happens to-day to be the most popular poem on Manasa Devi. Its poetical merits, no less than its brevity, account for this extensive popularity. I give here an extract from it* :—

The reason of his popularity.

Laksmindara and Behula are disguised as a *Yogi* and *Yogini*.

"Laksmindara and Behula in disguise, begged from door to door. But the people of Nichani Nagar did not recognise them. They visited every house begging alms, and they sounded the horn as they passed, reciting the name of Siva. People threw rice and cowries on their plate; but as soon as they were given, the alms disappeared and no one could tell how they had vanished. Behula's father was Saha, the merchant. His house stood in the centre of the village; around it were large and beautiful straw-built sheds, which were like lofty walls, and inside was a house that sparkled with gold. There lived Saha, the merchant with his wife Amala.

Yogi and *Yogini*.

* "মায়ারূপে ভিক্ষা মাগে বেহুলা নথাই।
নিছনি নগরে লোক কেহ চিনে নাই॥
বেহুলা নথাই দোহে যোগী আর যোগিনী।
ঘরে ঘরে মাগে ভিক্ষা হইয়া মায়াবিনী॥
সবাকার বাড়ী গিয়া শিঙ্গার ধ্বনি করে।
শিব শিব বলিয়া তাদের নিস্বরে॥
বেহুলা নথাই ভিক্ষা মাগে বাড়ী বাড়ী।
থালের উপরে কেউ দেয় চাউল কড়ি॥
থালে দিতে চাল কড়ি আচম্বিতে উঠে।
বুঝিতে না পারে কেহ বলে নানা ভাবে॥
বেহুলার বাপ যিনি সাহ সদাগর।
নগরের মধ্যস্থলে তার বটে ঘর॥
অপূর্ব্ব ঘরের দ্বার বিচিত্র আকার।
প্রাচীর প্রমাণ তার চারিদিকে ঘর॥

Behula went to see her parents. As she was disguised, no one recognised her. It was mid-day and the sun was up. The seeming *Yogi* and *Yogini* entered the inner appartments. The *Yogi* sounded his horn and Amala came out. On a golden plate she brought rice and cowries to present to the supposed ascetics. But Laksmindara hid his face for a moment on seeing his mother-in-law. Behula smiled softly; the smile on her lips was as sweet as nectar. Amala placed cowries and rice on her plate, but they disappeared as soon as given, through the spell cast by Manasa Devi. Amala saw this and asked the reason saying, 'Tell me, O Yogini!—who you are! There does not dwell a creature in the three worlds more unfortunate than I! Beholding you my grief overpowers me. There was, O Yogini, a daughter of mine, who strangely resembled you; but she sailed away with her husband's dead body, and I know not to what region she has gone. On seeing you, O Yogini, my grief for her is rekindled.

বাটীর ভিতরে যায় সোণার নিছনি।
সায় সদাগর তাতে অমলা বেণেণী॥
বেহুলা নাচনী গেল যা বাপ দেখিতে।
মায়াবলে কেহ তারে না পারে চিনিতে॥
দুই প্রহর বেলা যখন গগন মণ্ডলে।
যোগী আর যোগিণী তারা প্রবেশে মহলে॥
সত্য জানি বলি হয় শিঙ্গার যে ধ্বনি।
ঘর হইতে শুনে তাহা অমলা বেণেণী॥
সুবর্ণের থালায় দিবেন চাল কড়ি।
নথাই অন্তর হইল দেখিয়া খাশুড়ি॥
নথাই বিমুখ হইল পরম লজ্জায়।
বেহুলা ঈষৎ হাসে পিযুষের প্রায়॥
চাল কড়ি দেয় বামা যোগিনীর থালে।
আচম্বিতে উড়ে তাহা দেবী অন্তরালে॥
অমলা বেণেণী তখন দেখি এত সব।
যোগিনীরে জিজ্ঞাসিল করি বহু স্তব॥
সত্য সত্য কহ মোরে শুন গো যোগিনী।
ত্রিভুবন মধ্যে আমি বড় অভাগিনী॥
তোমায় দেখিয়া শোকে কান্দে মম প্রাণ।
মোর এক কন্যা ছিল তোমার সমান॥

Tell me then in your mercy, how is it that the rice and cowries have disappeared.' Behula said, 'We are Yogi and Yogini, we live under the trees. We beg alms in the day-time and at evening we return to our resting place. We know nothing more than this.' But Amala, her mother, looked intently at the face of Behula, beautiful as a lotus, and said 'No, you are Behula—my own Behula; Oh! my heart breaks to see you ; my Behula and Laksmindara, stand before me! Tell me truly that you are no other.' 'O mother' Behula said, ' what introduction do we need to you ? We are your own Behula and Laksmindara, cry no more, O mother. Here is the husband of my heart, restored to life!' At these words, Amala broke into sobs, and hearing her weep, the people of the village ran to her house. They asked her what it was that made her cry! Some said that Behula had

না জানি কোথায় গেল মড়া লৈয়ে কোলে।
যোগিনী জাগালে শোক বেহুলা বদলে॥
বিশেষ করিয়া মোরে কহ অর্থ মূল।
থালে দিতে নাই কেন কড়ি আর তণ্ডুল॥
বেহুলা বলেন তুমি কি কর জিজ্ঞাসা।
যোগী যোগিনী মোরা তরুতলে বাসা॥
নগরে মাগিয়া খাই হাতে করি থালা।
সন্ধ্যাকাল হইলে মোরা যাই তরুতলা॥
ইহা বিনা আর মোরা কিছু নাহি জানি।
ইথে বিনা বুঝ তুমি অমলা বেণেণী॥
অমলা বেহুলা মুখপদ্ম যে নেহালে।
দ্বিতীয় বেহুলা তুমি বেহুলা বদলে॥
তোমারে দেখিয়া মোর বিদরে হৃদয়।
বেহুলা নথাই বটে দেহ পরিচয়॥
বেহুলা বলেন পরিচয় দিব কি।
যোগী তোর জামাই যোগিনী তোর ঝি॥
বেহুলা নথাই বটে না কান্দিহ আর।
প্রাণপতি জিয়াইয়া করি যে উদ্ধার॥
শুনিয়া অমলা কান্দে পাইয়া পূর্ব্ব শোক।
ক্রন্দন শুনিয়া আইল নগরের লোক॥
কেন কান্দ শোন বলি অমলা বেণেণী।
কেহ বলে দেশে আইল বেহুলা নাচুনী॥

returned. People were struck with wonder,—the dead Laksmindara had come to life again! Said they, 'we never saw or heard of such a thing—Behula has restored her husband to life.'

Other authors of Manasa Mangal.

The names of most of the other authors of Manasa Mangal known up to now, are here enumerated. The latest of these writers, Rajah Rajsinha of Susung Durgapur in the district of Mymensing lived 125 years ago.

4. Ramajivana (1770 A. D.)
5. Rajah Rajsinha.
6. Anupa Chandra.
7. Krisnananda.
8. Gangadas Sen.
9. Gopi Chandra.
10. Pandit Ganga Das.
11. Golaka Chandra.
12. Govinda Das.
13. Chandrapati.
14. Jagat Vallabha.
15. Vipra Jagannatha.
16. Jagannath Sen.
17. Jagamohan Mitra.
18. Jaydev Das.
19. Dvija Jay Ram.
20. Vipra Janakinath.
21. Janakinath Das.
22. Nanda Lal.
23. Narayana.

দেখিয়া শুনিয়া লোকে লাগে চমৎকার।
মৃত লখিন্দর জিয়ে আইল পুনর্ব্বার॥
কোথাও না দেখি হেন কোথাও না শুনি।
মৃত পতি জিয়াইল বেহুলা নাচুনী॥"

From Manasa Mangal
by Ketaka Das Ksemananda.

24. Dvija Balarama.
25. Balarama Das.
26. Vanesvar.
27. Madhusudan De.
28. Yadunath Pandit.
29. Raghunath.
30. Viprarata Dev.
31. Ramakanta.
32. Ratideva Sen.
33. Dvija Rasik Chandra.
34. Radha Krisna.
35. Ramchandra.
36. Vipraram Das.
37. Ramdas Sen.
38. Ram Nidhi
39. Rām Vinoda.
40. Dvija Vansi Das.
41. Vansidhara.
42. Vanamali.
43. Vardhaman Das.
44. Vallabha Ghosh.
45. Vijaya.
46. Vipra Das.
47. Visvesvar.
48. Visnu Pal.
49. Sasthivara Sen.
50. Sitapati.
51. Sukavi Das.
52. Sukha Das.
53. Sudam Das.
54. Dvija Hari Ram.
55. Dvija Hridaya.
56. Kamal Narayana.
57. Kavi Karnapur.
58. Haridas.

In closing this account of the literature of the Manasa-cult, it must be remembered that in a country where women commonly courted death on their husbands' funeral pyre, this story of Behula may be regarded as the poet's natural tribute at the feet of their ideal.

Behula typifies the ideal of womanhood in Bengal.

(6) *Songs in honour of Chandi Devi*

Religion has been the main-spring of activity in the country from the earliest times. Astronomy originated with us, from the necessity for calculating the auspicious times for holding sacrifices. Geometry came into existence in order to settle the shape and size of altars. Poetry welled up for the singing of hymns to God. Mundane considerations never seriously occupied the attention of Indians or served as any inspiration to them.

Religion, the main-spring of our activity.

Bengali poetry was employed in its earlier stages for religious purposes. Poems in honour of Manasa Devi, Chandi and other local deities testify to the same inspiring motive in their writers. The songs in honour of the household deities had to be recited on the occasions of their worship. This was enjoined as a part of the religious function itself. Men and women assembled in great numbers in places of worship, inspired by faith, and the poets who wrote the poems gradually felt the need to make their performance really interesting and attractive. The earliest specimens of songs, in honour of the tutelary deities of Bengal, are generally short. They gave stories in brief from illustrating the might and grace of particular deities. For this purpose, a short and simple tale, without any pretensions to scholarship or poetical merit, was first composed; the next poet sought to improve upon this work and as particular religious sects gained ground and counted increasing numbers of votaries, their religious poems also improved, till the mere outlines of the earlier writers grew into elaborate poems in the hands of later poets.

How the poems gradually improved.

Religion inspires art and poetry.

Here, in Bengal, people themselves, lived in straw-built huts while the oratory of their tutelary deity was often made of bricks, and rich people living in brick-built mansions, always spent far larger sums of money on their chapels than on their own dwelling rooms. The finest touches of decorative art they could command were employed to adorn the temple. The idea of luxury could have no hold upon a people who lived plainly themselves but applied their æsthetic talents and capital to religious purposes. It could not produce any heart-burning by creating a sense of social inequality, as the ownership of a *Matha* or temple could not give rise to jealousy, however great and costly might be its decoration. The portals of a temple were open to all equally. At the same time art received its highest impetus from religious motive.

Bengali poetry also, like these chapels, had for its chief and primary object the worship of deities till it gradually became intermixed and enriched with romantic incidents of the human world, even as the walls and door-ways of a temple were decorated with fresco-paintings and sculptures on bas-reliefs representing scenes from life.

However crude may be the poetic literature dealt with in these chapters, it always makes an attempt to give expression to the truth that righteousness is upheld by the Almighty's law, that faith conquers in the long run and that the sceptic with all his brilliance and power ultimately sinks into insignificance.

The poems originated with the people.

The songs to which we have referred, formed the *popular* literature of Bengal and existed in some crude shape in the country before the Pauranic Renaissance. Though latterly taken up by the Brahmanic School, their subjects had been conceived and worked out by the people in an earlier epoch of our history when Brahmanic power had not yet asserted itself. The Brahmins improved these compositions by introducing Sanskrit words and many fine passages of classical beauty into them, but the subject-matter of the poems proves that it was the people

who gave them their original shape. The chief characters do not belong to the highest castes and the Brahmin has hardly any part in the drama of the poems. Dhanapati, Srimanta, Lahana, Khullana, Chand, Behula,—the main personages in all these poems, belong to the merchant-classes, which do not hold a very high position in Hindu society. The hunter Kalaketu comes from one of the lowest castes. In the manner in which the deities are represented to help their votaries, there is evidently a coarse and rustic element which indicates that the poems originated with the populace, rather than with the more refined classes. In any case, it is the people who still patronise them, for by far the larger number of the MSS. of these poems I recovered from the houses of carpenters, blacksmiths and other artisans. The Sanskritic School of poets, while embellishing the style and diction of these works, could not, at the same time, rebuild the plot or otherwise improve their subject-matter.

History of the Chandi Cult.

The history of the origin of the Chandi-cult is not easy to trace. Whether she was originally the deity of the Mongolians or Dravidians, latterly admitted into the Hindu pantheon, as we have supposed,—or she represents in an altered garb the mythological tradition of Semeremis, the queen of Assyria, who conquered Bactria about 2000 B.C.—or as the Indian Anna Purna she is to be identified with Anna Perenna, the goddess of the Romans, distributing cakes, whose festivals were celebrated on the 15th of March, is a problem which is not within the scope of this treatise to solve. The discovery made in Crete by Dr. Evans of the image of a goddess standing on a rock with lions on either sides, which is referred to a period as remote as 3000 B.C., has offered another startling point in regard to the history of the Chandi-cult. The mother in the Hindu mythology rides a lion, and in Markandeya Chandi there is a well known passage where she stands on a rock with a lion beside her for warring against the demons.

As heretofore mentioned, there was latterly an attempt on the part of the Brahmin poets to connect the humble deities

worshipped by rural folk with the gods and goddesses of the Pauranic pantheon. Mangal Chandi, a popular deity, was thus associated by the later poets with that Chandi who was described by Markandeya.

There are two stories which form the subject-matter of all poems in honour of Mangal Chandi. The first one is—

The story of Kalaketu

Nilamvara, son of Indra, was born into this world under a curse, as Kalaketu, the hunter. He married Phullara, daughter of Sanjayaketu, who used to sell in the market the venison and other flesh that he brought by hunting, and thus the pair earned their livelihood. The wild beasts of the forest, with the lion at their head, applied to Chandi for protection, as Kalaketu seemed bent on annihilating them. The lion himself was somewhat crest-fallen as he could not give effective aid to those who owed allegiance to him as their Lord. Chandi was moved to compassion and granted the boon that Kalaketu should no longer be able to molest or destroy them.

Kalaketu and the beasts.

It was morning and the dairy maids were carrying their curds in pitchers to the market for sale. On the right the cows were grazing in the pastures and the village looked lovely under the morning breeze. Kalaketu the hunter, with his quiver on his back and a great bow in his hand, and crystal ear-drops in his ears went forth on his usual hunting excursion. As he was about to enter the dense forest, he saw a lizard of a golden colour. This lizard, he thought, was not a good omen. He tied up the animal with the string of his bow and thought it would serve for a meal if no other should be forthcoming that day.

The lizard tied up.

By the will of Chandi, a dense fog covered the forest that morning, and though Kalaketu wandered all round it in quest

of a quarry, he could find none. Growing hungry, as the day advanced, with his fruitless search, he returned home, and acquainted his wife Phullara with the tale of his disappointment. He suggested that she should go to their neighbour Bimala and ask for the loan of a few seers of *khud* or rice-dust and some salt, and pointed out the lizard which lay bound with the string of his bow; this might also be killed and cooked, as no better could be found, to appease their hunger for the day.

Kalaketu returns home.

Phullara went to her friend Bimala for the loan and in the meantime Kalaketu found in the cottage a small quantity of flesh left unsold the day before. He carried this to Gola Ghat to try if any purchaser could be found for it.

Goes to Gola Ghat.

The lizard, who was no other than Chandi herself, now came out from the noose in which she was tied and assumed the form of a beautiful woman. Her complexion was of the colour of *Atasi* flower and her dark hair fell down her back in luxuriant curls. She looked like a damsel of sixteen. Her silk *sari*, her golden bracelets, her necklace sparkling with precious diamonds, her bodice embroidered with gems inset by Visva Karma himself, the god of art, the majesty of her demeanour—all indicated her noble rank, seemingly that of a queen. When poor Phullara came back to her hut, she could not trust her own eyes. Bewildered, she made a low obeisance to the lady, asking her who she was and why she had condescended to grace their lowly dwelling place with her august presence.

The lizard was Chandi in disguise.

Phullara is bewildered.

Chandi gave her story in language which had a double meaning. She said that her husband was old and poor, and showered his favour on her co-wife, whom he placed on his head, while she was treated with great indifference. This referred to Siva, the co-wife being the Ganges, who is represented as borne on the

She misunderstands Chandi.

head of the Great God. But Phullara understood the statement in its ordinary sense and did not at all suspect her guest to be the goddess Chandi.

She advises her to return to her own home.

Poor Phullara living in great poverty, prided herself on the love of her husband and was contented. She did not now wish the beautiful damsel to be seen by Kalaketu; so hiding her jealousy as best she could, with smiles, she advised her to return to her own home. "For" said she "the night is approaching, and it is not safe for one of your position to spend the night in a stranger's house." "You call your husband a stranger to me?" Said Chandi, "but he is devoted to me!" and indeed it was true that Kalaketu, the hunter, was a worshipper of Chandi. At these words of the goddess, Phullara's voice became choked with tears; but without manifesting any external sign of her emotion, she quoted from the *Sastras* to show the grave indiscretion of staying in a strange house without permission. "Think of Sita", she said, "how faultless she was, yet she was put to shame, because she had lived in Ravana's house for a time; Renuka, the wife of Bhrigu, was beheaded because her husband suspected her. If your co-wife quarrels with you, you can surely give tit for tat. Why should you leave your husband's roof for that?"

"I understand my own affairs," said Chandi, "it is not for you to instruct me in my duty." At this, a feeling of great unrest overtook Phullara, and she tried by a description of her abject poverty to work upon her guest's mind, that she might give up the idea of staying with them. She said, "only look, lady, at my poor hut, the roof made of palm leaves, supported on a single post made of ricinus tree! It breaks every year in the summer-storms.

Phullara describes her poverty.

The *Varu-Masi.*

In the month of *Vaishakha*, the fierce sun glares over head and its rays are like living fire. There is no shade to be found under the trees, my feet burn on the hot sands, as I go to market to sell the meat. My torn

rags are so scanty that I can scarcely draw them up to cover my head. If I leave my basket in the market for a moment, the kites fall upon it, and empty it immediately. Through the days of *Jyaistha* we have scarcely any food, and live, for the most part, on wild berries. In the months of *Asarh* and *Sravana*, when the newly formed clouds cover the sky, the village roads become muddy and pools full of water, a host of leeches bite me as I go out, though a snake-bite would be more welcome, for it would end my miseries. In the month of *Bhadra*, our whole village is flooded and scarcely can I find a customer for my meat. At the approach of *Asvin*, every one, seems to be happy, and the goddess Uma is worshipped in big houses. There is dance and merry-making, and people are dressed in beautiful raiment. But goats are sacrificed to the Goddess at every house, so our meat will not sell in the market, and in this hut we have so often to fast. In the winter-months, the little fire that we kindle with stray fuel gathered from the woods scarcely warms us. For want of clothes, I often wear the skin of a deer, which but ill-protects me from cold. Then comes the spring season, when the jasmine blooms and the bee whispers love to it gathering its honey. With the spring's soft influence in their hearts, maidens and youths are love-sick. But poor Phullara feels only the pain of hunger. Why do you, Oh noble lady, court a life so wretched as must be that of a hunter's wife?" Her eyes glistened with tears as she related the story of her woes.

Love's amends.

Nor did she at all exaggerate her miseries; only Kalaketu's love made such amends for the ills of life that she did not mind them. When the hunter's well-formed strong arm served as a pillow to her in the night, what did she care for want of a nice bed? When eating what she had cooked, Kalaketu praised her for her good cooking, what did she care that no food was left for her! Did she not feel gratified that her husband was happy, though she might have to fast all day herself? And who was this woman that came now to rob her of her husband's love—the only thing she prized in life?

Alas, exposure and hardship had sullied her youthful beauty; could she ever be a match for this paragon of beauty! She had no qualifications to commend her to her husband, except her love for him. What will she do now? Her heart broke at these thoughts. But Chandi was not at all moved by the accounts of poverty. "Very well, Phullara," she said, "from this day there will be no more poverty in this house. You see my jewels? With them I can buy a kingdom. Come, do not grieve, you will have a share of my wealth and I shall not be blamed for coming here: for Kalaketu himself brought me, drawing me hither by his noble qualities."

Phullara feels jealousy.

This was what Phullara understood her to say. But indeed her words bore another sense, and in that sense were true; for she said Kalaketu himself had brought her there *bound with the string of his bow*. The word গুণ in Bengali means both a bow-string and noble qualities.

Grief was like to rend Phullara's heart at these last words of Chandi. She could no longer suppress her feelings. Great tears fell from her eyes, and she turned and went weeping all the way to meet Kalaketu at Golaghat. There, as the hunter was negotiating the sale, Phullara approached him with tearful eyes. He was struck with wonder—never having seen her moved in such a manner and asked what was it that caused her so much pain. "You have no co-wife," he said "and no sister-in-law nor mother-in-law to quarrel with you in the house. Why then, O my darling, do you weep?" Phullara replied, "I have none, my lord, to quarrel with. It is true that you are my all. But it is you who have caused me this pain. What fault did you find in me that you have become a villain like Ravana! Whose wife have you brought to our house? The king of Kalinga is a cruel tyrant. He will kill you and rob me of my honour by force, if he gets the slightest inkling of your act."

The jealous wife and her hungry lord.

Kalaketu stood wonder-struck for a moment and then said "This is no time for joking. I am dying of hunger. If what you

charge me with is false, I shall cut off your nose with a knife." Kalaketu's address was rough but straightforward, as befitted an illiterate huntsman of his class. It is difficult for the foreign reader to understand the abhorrence with which the huntsman is regarded in Bengal life. He is something of a poacher, something of a trapper and altogether a savage. Throughout this poem, the poet seeks to deprive Kalaketu of any refinement as will appear from this coarse threat to his wife. Phullara, of course, was far from being sorry at his abuse; for his words indicated his innocence. Both of them, therefore, hurried home, and when near the hut, Kalaketu saw a strange sight, as though ten thousand moons illumined the vault of night.

A strange sight.

A damsel, whose beauty dazzled the eyes, was standing with gaze fixed on the sky. The glowing light of evening fell on her profuse black hair, tinting it with a golden hue. She looked like a statue of stainless marble carved in relief against the azure. She wore a crown on her head which shone in the light, the diamonds sparkling with wonderful brilliance. The majesty of her form struck the huntsman dumb. He fell to the ground, bowing down to her in reverence. After this, he asked her who she was and what was her mission there. Chandi stood silent without a word. Then Kalaketu said, "The home of a huntsman is deemed unholy. The bones of animals lie strewn around it, and it is filled with the smell of rotten meat. For any one, of your position, this is not a fit place to come to. It will require you a bath in the Ganges to cleanse you of your sin, in coming to visit such foul quarters. Why is it, O mother, I ask again, that you have come here?" Chandi still gave no reply. The hunter continued:—

"The world will speak ill of you if you remain in this house; and infamy, you know, is death to woman. Come with me, leave the house and I am ready to lead you back to your home. But I shall not go alone with you; Phullara will accompany us, and we shall select a path frequented by our friends. In reply to

this Chandi uttered not a word, and Kalaketu said impatiently, "You are no doubt the daughter of a rich man and a rich man's wife too. I am only a poor huntsman whose touch is avoided by all. What business can there possibly be that would bring you to my house? I humbly beg that you should leave this house at once." But Chandi smiled and did not at all seem inclined to move. Then the huntsman said, "Be witness, O setting sun, that this woman means mischief", and taking his bow he aimed an arrow at her. To his great surprise he found, however, that he could not shoot. His hands seemed to be controlled by a mysterious power. The arrow could not be released and both it and the bow became rigid in his hands. Phullara came to his rescue, but could not take away either the bow or the arrow from her husband's hands. Kalaketu stood like one, turned to stone, and for causes unknown to himself, tears fell from his eyes. He tried to speak but could not. He seemed to be fixed to the spot by a spell and stood, looking like a painted archer.

He aims an arrow at her.

A painted archer.

Chandi said, "My son, I am Chandi. I have come to help you in your poverty. You will worship me on the third day of every week. Only place my *ghat* in your home and there will be no end to your prosperity."

Chandi appears in her own form.

Kalaketu, now restored to speech, said "Pardon me, but how can I believe you to be Chandi? My whole life has been spent in wickedness. I have killed numberless animals—in fact killing is my avocation. You probably know some spell by which you have overpowered me. If you are really Chandi, then mercifully show yourself to me, O Divine Mother, in that form in which you are worshipped by the world."

In a moment the figure of the damsel grew in size. The crown on her head seemed to touch the starry regions of the sky, and her ten arms holding the lotus, the discus, the trident, and other weapons were extended outwards in the ten directions. Her gracious face, full of majesty and glory, smiled on him with motherly love. Her apparel, bedecked with jewels, fluttered in

the evening breeze. One of her feet was placed on a lion and the other on the demon-king Mahisasura. Thus sublime and awe-inspiring, she revealed herself to the sight of the mortal couple and the winds threw treasures of flowers to the feet of the gracious mother of the universe.

Kalaketu and Phullara with folded palms stood before Chandi, tears still flowing from their eyes. Gradually the form of Chandi faded away in the sky. The whole thing appeared to have been an illusion. The tint of the Divine Mother was merged in the colour of the *Atasi* flower which abounded in the place. Her hair vanished in the clouds. Her majesty spread itself in the quiet glow of the firmament, and slowly the glorious vision passed away. The earth and heaven appeared like the sacred emblem of her divine presence. Then, once more she stood before them in the form of the beautiful damsel standing at the cottage door, and asking what boon the couple would beg of her. Kalaketu only half articulately said, "Oh Mother, we want nothing more, our life is made blessed; our wants are all satisfied."

Chandi gives them wealth.

Chandi now bestowed a valuable ring on the huntsman and showed where a great treasure lay buried in seven jars. She also helped him to carry the treasure to his cottage. Her command was that Kalaketu should found a kingdom in Gujarat with the money and there rule his subjects justly, and introduce the worship of Chandi amongst them.

Kalaketu and Murari Sila.

Next morning Kalaketu went forth with the ring to turn into hard cash. The money-changer, to whom he applied, was Murari Sil, a dishonest fellow, who tried to cheat him of the precious possession by paying him a nominal value. But the diamond in the ring was peerless and Chandi had told Kalaketu of its value. After much haggling the price was settled at seven crores of rupees.

Kalaketu becomes king of Gujarat.

With this money, and the treasure found in the jars, he proceeded to Gujarat where he cut down the forests and founded a city in honour of Chandi. A great flood in the meantime overtook the kingdom of Kalinga

and the people there became homeless. With Vulan Mandal at their head they came to Gujarat in crowds to inhabit it. Amongst them came Bharu Datta—a knave who, with his glib tongue and high-sounding phrases won his way into the confidence of King Kalaketu; but Bharu grievously oppressed the people, and so he was turned out of Gujarat by order of the king. While in this plight he uttered a mysterious threat, saying, "Phullara the Queen will soon be reduced again to her old position as the wife of a huntsman. She will once more carry baskets on her head as she used to do." He went to Kalinga and there gaining access to the court of the king, gave information as to how Kalaketu, formerly a poor huntsman in his dominion, had now founded a new kingdom in Gujarat by taking away with him, nearly half the population of Kalinga. At this report the monarch's anger knew no bounds. He led an hostile expedition and Kalaketu was conquered and thrown into prison. There in deep despair, the huntsman offered prayer to Chandi. He was to be beheaded the next morning. In this desperate plight he looked up to heaven and prayed with all his heart to have once more a sight of that Mother of the Universe who had condescended to visit his cottage when he was a huntsman. She came again and held out her gracious hand offering him her benediction. That night a terrible dream was dreamt by the king of Kalinga that his army was destroyed mysteriously by some unseen agency. He was so impressed that next day he restored Kalaketu to his kingdom, and his own army was restored to life by the grace of Chandi. Bharu Datta was turned out from both the kingdoms and the two kings became fast friends.

Bharu Datta.

Kalaketu is conquered by the king of Kalinga.

Restored to his kingdom.

Bharu punished.

Shortly after this, Kalaketu died and went to heaven, as Nilamvara, son of Indra, the period of the curse having expired. Phullara who had been Chhaya, Nilamvara's wife and had been born as the daughter of

The term of curse over.

Sanjayaketu with the object of sharing the misfortunes of her husband, accompanied him to heaven, on the expiration of her self-imposed term of life on earth.

Puspaketu succeeds.

Puspaketu, son of Kalaketu and Phullara, then became the King of Gujarat.

We now pass to the second of these two companion-stories, which, although different, always form a single volume.

The Story of Srimanta Sadagar

Khullana.

Ratnamala, a nymph of Indra's heaven, was, under a curse, born on earth as Khullana.

Dhanapati and his favourite play.

The merchant Dhanapati was in the full vigour of his youth. He was a well-built man of handsome features, well-versed in the fashionable learning of the day and immensely rich. He had a wife named Lahana.

His favourite amusement was playing with pigeons. The male pigeon was taken to the forest and there let loose while its mate was kept in the house of our hero—many miles off. The male pigeon would then, inspite of obstructions, fly back home to join his companion and the homeward flight of the bird through the sky would be enthusiastically watched by the young men who sported with them. One day Dhanapati had loosed his male pigeons, as usual, in an adjoining wood. All of them returned except one who was pursued by a kite. Seeing no other way to escape from his enemy, the pigeon dropped to the ground and hid itself in the outer garments of a very young and fascinating maiden. This lady was no other than Khullana—the daughter of Laksapati—the merchant. The girl was much pleased with the beauty of the bird and gave it shelter.

Now, Dhanapati waited some time for his favourite pigeon but when it grew late and the wanderer was not forthcoming, he commenced a vigorous search with his companions. He ran

along the steep edge of the hills, through thorny plants and briers, till breathless, coming to the limits of a village named Ichhaninagar, he heard that Laksapati's daughter Khullana had taken possession of his pet bird. He at once hid to the mango groves where Khullana was gaily rambling with her maids. Khullana knew that Dhanapati was the husband of her cousin Lahana. This relationship gives a woman liberty in Hindu society to make a little fun and Khullana did not allow the opportuniiy to slip. In coquettish tones, she argued with Dhanapati—now begging for his bird, that it had come of its own accord and she could not give it up. The kite would have killed it and as she had saved its life, Dhanapati had no right over it. The more the young merchant argued this point, the more did she smile sweetly and stood firm in her resolve not to return the pigeon.

The merchant and the pretty damsel.

The charming smiles of this young and lovely damsel made Dhanapati's head giddy. He forgot all about his pigeon and stood rooted to the spot lost in a reverie. The girl, however, returned the bird and disappeared with her maids. But the echo of her joyous laughter rang in Dhanapati's ears after she had gone.

His first act on returning home was to depute Janardana, a Brahmin and a match-maker, to propose to Laksapati that he should give him his daughter in marriage.

Proposes to marry

Laksapati could make no objection to such a proposal. Considering all points, where could he expect to find a better bride-groom than Dhanapati? He had already a wife, it was true, but people of his rank and position were scarcely expected to remain contented with one wife, and this could not be held as a disqualification. Laksapati's wife, however, objected to give her fair daughter to Dhanapati, because she knew his wife Lahana to be a termagant. "It would be better," she said, "to drown our Khullana in the Ganges than to give her away to a man who has already a wife and that wife of the temper of

Lahana." The astrologer was called in; he examined the marks on the palm of Khullana and prophesied that if she were not given to a man who already had a wife, she was sure to become a widow. Now widowhood in India is held more terrible than death. So the frightened mother immediately gave her consent. But Dhanapati himself had to obtain the permission of Lahana to marry a second wife. The news of these negotiations had already reached Lahana, and she sat in one corner of her room as angry as the summer-clouds when it is ready to hurl the thunder-bolt. But though shrew and obstinate, she could be weak to the verge of folly. Dhanapati had nothing else to plead than to say a few sweet words to her; "You are so beautiful, my darling; but having no one to aid you in the duties of the kitchen, you are growing sickly. How I pity your lot! If you do not mind it, dear wife, I shall find for you one who will be like a maid-servant in the kitchen and carry out all your orders in domestic affairs." He showed her also five *tolas* of gold which he intended to give to the goldsmith to make a pair of bracelets of a wonderfully beautiful pattern for her. Lahana's anger was dispersed like the summer-clouds at these sweet words from her husband, and accepting his gift, she readily gave her consent to the proposed match. Thus Khullana was married to Dhanapati.

Lahana is won over.

The marriage.

At that very time a pair of birds called suka and sari was purchased by the king of Ujani. These birds had a marvellous gift, they talked like men. As there was no artist in the country who could make a beautiful cage of gold for the birds, and as the artists of Gaur were noted for their skill in making gold-cages, the king asked Dhanapati to go to Gaur and give orders for a first-class gold cage; he was to see it done and carry it to Ujani. While giving this order, the king smiled and said, "I depute you for this task because I know that you have recently married a very beautiful bride, and you will not wish to stay long at Gaur; I shall therefore have the thing done in the shortest possible time."

The merchant is sent to Gaur.

Dhanapati Sadagar left Ujani for Gaur consigning young and lovely Khullana to the care of Lahana.

Now Lahana bore Khullana no grudge. True to the promises she had made to her husband, she treated the girl with great kindness, taking particular care to prepare dainties for her, and looking to her comfort with the watchful eyes of a loving sister. But Durvala, the maid-servant, did not like this state of things. As long as there was no quarrel between the co-wives, thought she, the task of the maid-servant was but thankless drudgery. "As soon as there is a quarrel between such persons, either will hold my services dear if I can abuse the other." Thinking in this strain, she privately warned Lahana against indulging in such affection for the co-wife. "Your dark thick hair is already strewn with gray," she said, "the hair of Khullana, on the other hand, is as black as a cluster of bees and as pleasant to see as the plumes of a peacock. Your cheeks are darkened by the shadows of passing youth, whereas young Khullana's face glows with the freshness of the dawn; while her beauty is gradually brightening, yours is waning. When the merchant returns, he will be drawn by the fresher charms of his young wife and your position will be permanently in the kitchen. Why not take early steps to save yourself from such coming danger? You are feeding a venomous snake with milk. Take care, or it may bite you and so put an end to your life."

Durvala poisons Lahana's mind.

The contrast.

Now, Lahana, as already said, was rather stupid. She lent a credulous ear to this mischievous advice, and asked Durvala if she could help her with any device by which she might get rid of her co-wife or otherwise bring her husband completely within her own control. Durvala went in her turn to Lila, a Brahmin widow, versed in the charms by which a wife may fully control her husband. She prescribed a charm which required the following ingredients: tortoise-claws, raven's blood, dragon's scales, shark's suet, bat's wool, dog's gall, lizard's intestine, and

an owlet dwelling in the cavity of a rock.* Ending her advice, however, Lila said "This charm will doubtless have its due effect; but I am not sure how far it will help you to gain your end. In some cases it fails and I cannot say, with certainty, that in yours it will be infallible. There is one thing, however, which I can assure you, will help you to win your husband's love, and is better to my mind, than all these medicinal charms put together."

The charm

Lahana dismisses Lila.

"What is that?" asked Lahana with eagerness. "It is sweet words," Lila said, "and a loving temper that will act best of all to win the love of your husband." Lahana said: "But it is absurd! I have hitherto ruled my house alone. If I find that he grows indifferent to me, while Khullana is in high favour, I shall not be able to brook it. My course has always been like this. If I found a flaw in my husband, however, small it might be, I made much of it, and continually harped upon his weak point. I cannot consent to live here like a tame lamb. It was foolish to send for you, Lila, in order to receive this advice!" She then dismissed the wise woman, and after consultation with Durvala, had recourse to another device. She had a letter written, purporting to have been addressed to herself by Dhanapati, from Gaur. It ran as follows:—

Another device.

"My blessings on you, my loving wife, Lahana! I hope you and all with you are all well. I am at Gaur and shall probably stay for sometime longer. I have some misgivings about Khullana, and my decision is deliberate. I feel that my marriage with her has not been

The false letter.

* These extraordinary ingredients for the preparation of charms were used by the Indian gypsies who wandered all over the world during the Middle Ages, and were thus known to the people of East and West alike. We find them again in the description of the witch's broth in Macbeth which includes among other things, adder's fork, eye of newt, scale of dragon, maw of shark, wool of bat, gall of goat, lizard's legs and wings of owlet. This list strikingly tallies with that given in this Chandi Kavya by Mukundaram who was a Bengali contemporary of Shakespeare.

approved of by the gods. It was an inauspicious affair. No sooner was I married to her, than there came a command from the Rajah of Ujani requiring me to leave home and to sojourn in distant parts; and since then I have had no peace of mind. It is not safe or desirable to treat Khullana with love and affection, lest Providence be further enraged and hurl more miseries upon me. You must do as I say. As soon as you get this letter, strip her of all ornaments and fine apparel. Give her a rag of coarse *khuea* cloth to wear, and appoint her to tend the sheep in the fields. Give her half a meal of coarse quality and let her sleep in the place where the rice is husked. Do not omit to carry out these orders."

Lahana thought if Khullana were treated in this way, her beauty would fade and she would never be able to gain full control over her husband's heart. This would happen as a matter of course from hardship, starvation and exposure.

This letter was enclosed in an envelope, and Lahana, with tearful eyes, professing great love for Khullana, met her and showed it to her, at the same time saying, that she was bound to carry out her husband's orders, though she would do so with the greatest reluctance and her heart, in fact, was breaking at the thought of what was before her.

Lahana professes great love.

Now, Khullana was very intelligent, and though not a shrew like Lahana, she could not be so easily made to yield to the stratagem without resistance. She saw the letter and pronounced it a forgery, declaring it impossible that her husband should write in such a manner about her. The hand-writing was not his, and the whole thing was the work of Lahana in spite of this great love which she professed for her. A hot discussion was soon followed by an exchange of blows. Lahana was the stronger of the two. So Khullana could not long maintain the fight and had to yield to superior force.

Exchange of blows.

Thereupon the youthful Khullana, as beautiful as picture, clothed in rags and with only the leaf of a fig tree to protect her head from the sun, went out to the fields to tend the sheep. Unaccustomed to walking, she grew tired and weary and she could not manage the animals. They ran into the rice-fields and ate up the plants, while the owners reproached her. She wiped away her tears with one hand, while the other held the shephard's crook. By this time the spring had come. The trees were hung with blossoms and the fields were covered with fresh green verdure. The bees hummed in concert with the songs of the birds; and the *Madhavi*, the *Asoka*, and the *Malati* flowers looked like fringes on the border-line of the sky. Amidst all this beauty, Khullana, in spite of her hardships, felt a longing to see her husband. She went up to the bee and begged it not to hum. She prayed the Kokila to go to Gaur and bring her, by its cooings, to her husband's recollection. She caressed the tender *Madhavi* creeper, rich with the treasures of the spring that clung to the *Asoka* tree and called it most fortunate to have its supporter at hand.

Khullana tends the sheep.

The gay spring and Khullana.

A few days passed in this manner and her beauty gradually faded. She could not eat the coarse food, she could not sleep on the hard ground, she could not manage the sheep that were placed in her charge. One day at noontide, as she was reposing in the shade of a tree, Chandi appeared before her in a dream in the guise of her mother. "The sight of your misery rends my heart, O Khullana' she said. "The sheep named Sarvasi has been eaten up by a fox. Lahana will all but kill you to-day." The girl awoke with a start and sought for Sarvasi. Alas! Sarvasi was gone. Tears rolled down her cheeks, as she cried "Sarvasi, Sarvasi," all about the field. She did not abandon her search till evening. But the sheep was not found. Khullana did not venture to return home, for fear of Lahana's punishment. In the evening strolling all round the field with tearful eyes, famished, worn-out,

Sarvasi lost.

and fatigued as she was, she could no longer walk. The shades of evening spread over the earth. It was all so cool! There was a consolation in the very darkness of the night—a healing breath in the breeze and Khullana thought she was safe from the sight of men and began to weep in silence, resigning herself to Chandi, when suddenly she saw at a little distance, lights kindled by five beautiful damsels. They were doing some thing which she could not understand. With slow pace she came up to them and introduced herself to these damsels, who were no other than five nymphs of Indra's heaven. They were grieved to hear of the miseries of Khullana, and asked her to worship Chandi as they were there doing, giving her every assurance that the cause of her grief would be removed thereby.

Khullana worships Chandi.

There, with heart cleansed of all sin by her manifold sufferings,—with the resignation and faith of one who is helpless,—she offered flowers to Chandi, and a feeling of pure satisfaction and complacency stole over her which she had never known before. She felt contented with her lot and now cared not what might befall her. She slept at night with the five nymphs and had a quiet and undisturbed rest. Next morning she looked prettier than she had ever done before.

As Khullana did not return home at night, Lahana felt great anxiety about her safety. "Has any evil," she thought, "befallen Khullana? Who knows what has come upon her, she may have been killed by some wild beast, or which would be worse, she may have been taken away by wicked men, young and beautiful as she is! My husband will shortly return and what shall I say to him? He especially commended her to my charge." Lahana felt uneasy and could not sleep all night.

Lahana's fears.

That very night Dhanapati, the merchant, had a dream, in which Khullana seemed to appear before him, and tenderly censure him for forgetting her so long. He felt a great desire to meet his young wife, and

Dhanapati sets out for home.

as the cage was now ready, set out for home, the very next morning.

Lahana's repentence

In the meantime Lahana had sent her people to search for Khullana. In the morning she came of her own accord and Lahana having repented of her wickedness, received her with open arms, and began once more to show her all that loving care with which she had treated her before Durvala had poisoned her mind against her.

Dhanapati returned to Ujani. There, after an interview with the king Vikrama Kesari, from whom he received praise and rewards, he came home, and went straight to the inner apartments of his house. After a formal interview with Lahana, he hastened to meet Khullana. She was dressed in the finest attire and looked exceedingly beautiful ! The merchant addressed her with loving words but the coy damsel would give no response, which only enhanced his eagerness to enjoy her company. When they were alone together, in answer to his words of endearment,

Dhanapati and Khullana.

tears flowed from her eyes. Her confidence was gradually won, and then she produced the letter given her by Lahana, commanding that Khullana should be sent away to the forest to tend the sheep. Dhanapati was taken by surprise at this disclosure, and heard with anger and regret the sad tale of the miseries endured by Khullana in his absence. Being now convinced of her husband's affection, Khullana willingly forgave the wickedness of the co-wife and gave free expression to the sweetness of her own feeling, while Dhanapati bitterly repented having left her in the care of so dangerous a woman as Lahana.

Next day, Khullana was asked by Dhanapati to provide a banquet for some friends whom he had invited; and Lahana's anger knew no bounds at being thus passed over in her own house. The invited guests thoroughly enjoyed the viands prepared for them by Khullana, and lavished praise on her skilful cooking. This further wounded the feelings of Lahana, who had

eaten nothing the whole day. In the evening, however, Khullana went to her and fell at her feet, asking forgiveness for any unknown offence she might have given her, and matters were mended by this kindly act.

The co-wives become friendly to one another.

The poets here introduce an episode describing the *sradha* ceremony of the father of Dhanapati, in which all his caste-men were invited to his house; there a dispute arose as to which of them should receive precedence as the head-*Kulin* in that assembly. Dhanapati himself assigned the preference to Chand the merchant, but at this, the argument waxed so hot that many of the host's clansmen forsook him. At this stage some wicked men present in the meeting, who wanted to lower Dhanapati in the estimation of all, seemed to cast a slur on the honour of his family by their insinuations against Khullana's character, as she had been, for a period, deprived of the protection of Zenana-life and sent to the fields to tend the sheep. Dhanapati was naturally indignant at this; but as the party against him, who were jealous of his wealth and power, grew strong, Khullana, in spite of her husband's strong objections, stepped forward on the scene and declared her unshaken resolve to pass through a number of ordeals with a view to establishing her innocence. The ordeals began. A venomous snake was let loose to bite her, but she appeared livelier after the bite, Chandi having herself protected her favourite. Her enemies, however, said that it was all a trick, the snake was a harmless one. Next she was branded with a red-hot iron; but by the grace of Chandi, it did not leave any mark on her person. The relations again said that this was also a trick. The iron-bar was made red by some device without being heated.

The quarrel amongst clansmen.

The ordeals.

Next, a house of lac was built and Khullana was placed inside, and it was set on fire. The fire spread with fury; the lac-house was destroyed. Dhanapati grew mad with grief; he offered to throw himself into the fire and put an end to his life, as

without his loving wife Khullana, who had suffered great ills in life and now met a tragic death all for his own fault, life would be unbearable. But just as he stepped forward to fling himself into the burning embers, there appeared Khullana fresher and livelier than ever,—her red apparel shining in the glare of the fire, and not a hair of her head touched by the flames with which she was surrounded.

The relations and friends stood wonder-struck at this spectacle. Instinctively they bowed to her in reverence, and the matter came to an end, Khullana having aquitted herself triumphantly in all the trials.

The sea-voyage.

Dhanapati next undertook a sea-voyage for trade. He fixed a day for setting out from home and called in an astrologer to say whether that date would be auspicious or not. The fortune-teller ventured to say that he disapproved of the day, but such a contradiction seemed to Dhanapati like impertinence, and he ordered his servants to turn him out of the house with contumely. Khullana meanwhile was worshipping Chandi in order to gain her favour and win her blessings for her husband on the eve of his departure.

Dhanapati offends Chandi.

When Dhanapati came to bid farewell to his wife and found her engaged in this worship of Chandi, he grew very angry, and saying, "What witch is this you are worshipping, wife!", he kicked over the *ghat* and went away with a frown.

The disaster.

On the high sea, the six ships of Dhanapati were all wrecked by a storm, which was sent by Chandi,—all, save the *Madhukara*—that is to say, the flag-ship in which the merchant himself had embarked. After this disaster he went to Ceylon. Near that Island in the great Indian Ocean he saw a strange sight. Lotuses with red petals and large green leaves were springing up all over the blue waters, and moving gently in the breeze. On the noblest and loveliest of these flowers was seated a

The wonderful vision.

woman of unparalleled beauty. Her majestic looks and the light that shone about her face spread a quiet glow over the blue waters, and she looked as if painted against the blue horizon. One might almost have imagined that the lotuses blushed for shame at being eclipsed by her resplendent beauty. And what was this woman doing? Wonder of wonders! She had caught with one tender hand a huge elephant which with the other she was putting into her mouth. The stem of the lotus was shaking under its strange load, in which the beautiful and the grotesque were fantastically blended, and Dhanapati cried out in wonder: "But how can the weak lotus bear so heavy a burden!"

He landed in Ceylon and had an interview with the king to whom he related this wonderful vision. The king only smiled and said it was a mad man's story, and all the courtiers laughed at him. It was a marvel, added the king, that his ship itself had not been swallowed up by the lady! But when the merchant insisted on his point, and talked in all other respects like a sane man, he entered into an agreement with him, to the effect that he would forego half his kingdom and bestow it on Dhanapati if he could show him the same phenomenon. Should it prove, however, that all was a mere fantasy, as the king thought, his ships and all his property would be confiscated and he would be thrown into a dungeon for life for putting a monarch to such trouble.

The king disbelieves the story.

The contract.

They both embarked on a ship and reached the spot where Dhanapati had witnessed the extraordinary spectacle. But a wide space of blue waters confronted them, huge blue waves, rolling in from the blue sea,—blue waves, moving to the blue horizon, and nothing more—no lady, no lotus, no elephant met their eyes. The merchant looked everywhere in vain for them. Alas, he was thrown into a dungeon, and condemned to be there in chains for the remainder of his life.

Dhanapati thrown into prison.

The play of the boys.

At Ujani, a son was born to Khullana, a lovely child whom everyone in the village loved dearly. He was named Srimanta. He played manly games with his comrades. The play of *Ha-do-do*, by which the muscles become strong, was his favourite, but the pastoral games of *Sri* Krisna were the craze of the young men of that period One of the boys would act the part of the demon of the whirl-wind—Trinavarta. He would sweep down like a whirl-wind and surprise the others who were acting the parts of the Vrindavana-shepherds, and Srimanta, figuring as Krisna, would kill Trinavarta after a severe battle. Sometimes a boy would take the part of Yasoda, but Srimanta, the young Krisna, proved too heavy for this, when the former tried to lift him in her arms. Poor Yasoda fell to the ground with her Krisna and the sound of laughter was heard among the boys, who enjoyed failure and success with equal zest. At one time Narasinha Das, one of the companions of Srimanta, became Bramha, the god with four faces, and took away a kid belonging to the shepherds. Srimanta, as Krisna, produced an illusion and in a mysterious way the kid was made to reappear, and Bramha's attempt to thwart Krisna was foiled.

Thus all that Krisna did with the shepherds in the groves of Vrinda was re-enacted in Ujani, and no one there played his part so well as Srimanta, the son of Dhanapati.

The doting mother and her child.

Then he was sent to a day-school belonging to Dvija Janardan. The boy acquired Sanskrit rhetoric and grammar in no time. He displayed wonderful intelligence and power of grasping the texts. Whatever he laid his hands on, he did with marvellous grace, for surely his birth had been the result of a boon, granted by Chandi to his mother Khullana, as a reward for her life-long-devotion to that goddess in the midst of many sufferings.

Much as Srimanta was loved, however, his father's long and unexplained absence from home, cast a gloom on the family;

and going to school at the age of twelve, the sensitive child was wounded by a slight levelled against his birth by his teacher on the score of his father's long absence from home.

Now Srimanta was loved by all, he had never been accustomed to harshness. His teacher's remarks, therefore, cut him to the quick. He was now a lad of some twelve years. He made for home straight-way and going there shut himself up in a room alone, not even seeing his mother.

Khullana made enquiries about him and discovered him in his solitude sobbing out his misery, and when his mother had asked him again and again what was the matter, he told her what the teacher had said, weeping all the while vehemently; he expressed his desire to go at once in search of his father, wherever he might be, nor would he touch food, until his mother gave him permission to set out on this quest.

Resolved on sea voyage

Poor Khullana did not know what to do. Her dear lord had been away for more than twelve years She bore a sorrow in her heart for which there was no cure. Every night when others were asleep, she would lie and weep for long hours till her eyes closing in sleep, she sometime dreams that her husband had come back, and was speaking sweetly to her. But when morning dawned, she knew no joy, for it woke her up to stern reality taking from her this sweet interview. When her neighbours would talk of their husbands, she would retire to her room, with pale face, to hide her tears. The only consolation of her life was her son Srimanta. When she saw him in such distress about his father,—she felt that her heart would break. She was wounded at a vital point and could only cry helplessly without trying to hide her tears. How would she be able to live without her son—a mere lad, who was the only solace of her lonely life! But the boy though so young, possessed unflinching determination. Khullana, Lahana, Durvala and other inmates of the house tried all that was in their power to dissuade him from his course, but in vain; and when nothing could shake his

resolve, Khullana sent information to King Vikrama Kesari with a piteous representation of her case and asked his help in bringing Srimanta to his senses. The king readily consented to give his aid in counselling the boy to a right course; but Srimanta would not touch food and seemed resolved to starve himself if permission were not granted him for going. When the king called him into his presence, he could not reply to him, his voice being chocked with tears.

The king intervenes.

But to no avail.

It was very difficult to deal with such a headstrong boy. Khullana at last in deep anguish of heart gave him permission to undertake a sea-voyage, and young Srimanta gladly made himself ready for the journey. Khullana gave him sound advice as to how he should proceed with his mission, and so did the king, who also ordered seven good ships to be built for him. They were made ready in a short time, and Srimanta set sail in them on an auspicious day.

The mothers' consent.

Khullana all the while was engaged in worshipping Chandi. What else could she do in her utter despair? Her husband was gone and now her child also was to be parted from her. The *ghat* of Chandi was her only solace in this deplorable condition. When the ships sailed, she stood looking with wistful eyes at the southern skies at which the unfurled sails seemed to be aiming. She resigned herself to the will of Chandi and remained fixed to the spot like a statue.

He departs.

Srimanta was overjoyed as the sea-wind touched him. He was determined to find his father or die in the attempt. He had felt all along that his mother was sad, without being able to divine the reasons. He had always marked the melancholy expression of her lovely face, and he now understood that her sorrow was all for the absence of her lord. If he could not make his mother happy, what was the good of his living at all. "O Divine Mother Chandi, do thou help this poor boy to gain

his object,"—he prayed day and night and the ships went on towards Ceylon.

The same spectacle again.

There is here a long catalogue of the cargo and a detailed description of the voyage. Last of all he came to Ceylon, but near the Island, upon the waters of the great Indian Ocean the same spectacle that had caused his father's trouble, met his eyes also. A large space of blue water was covered with lotuses and upon the finest and noblest of them, sat the same mysterious and beautiful woman with dishevelled hair. She also was swallowing an elephant.

And a similar contract.

The wonder which a spectacle like this naturally creates in one's mind had its effect on Srimanta and when landed in Ceylon, in an interview with the king Salivahana, the very first thing that he related was concerning the woman seated on the lotus. "Why, this is another crazy head!" cried the king, and he tried to convince the boy that it was a silly story,—a mere fantasy of his brain; but Srimanta would not stop till an agreement was made that if he succeeded in showing it to the king, he would give him his only daughter in marriage with half the kingdom as her dowry, but if it proved a failure he should be beheaded. The king already loved the boy for his handsome appearance and keen intelligence, but as Srimanta seemed determined to bring ruin upon himself, there was no help for it.

Doomed to execution.

They sailed to the spot on board a ship. But alas! the illusion was not there. By order of the king Srimanta was now taken to the place of execution. He was now a young and beautiful boy of twelve, so lovely that the women shed tears as they saw him carried for execution. Srimanta recollected his mother's face and tears came into his eyes. He had come to seek his father, but he was not destined to meet him in this world. He thought of his playmates of Ujani, of the fair fields and meadows, where they sported,—of Durvala, the maid-servant, of his step-mother

Lahana, of his grand-mother, and of every other person and object associated with his dear home, and tears which he could not check, streamed down his cheeks. On the scaffold he clasped his hands, and cried, "Chandi, Chandi, O Divine Mother! look at your child! O Chandi, I would by your grace find out my father,—I am now going to be taken away from both my parents." He collected himself in a moment,—the growing emotions were checked, and he named all the names of Chandi, beginning with each of the 34 characters of the Bengali Alphabet, and offered hymns to the goddess. There, like a statue, he sat and looked like a *yogi*, though a mere lad. In his distress the boy attained the resigned spirit of an old man, and God, being both father and mother to us, comes to man when he is thus resigned; when we know that we are mere tools in the divine hands, and that He is the main actor on this stage, and knowing so cling unto Him as a helpless child does to the mother, then the divine grace becomes unfailing.

Prays to Chandi.

Chandi appeared on the scaffold. The divine mother took Srimanta in her arms and the executioner was overawed by her presence. Information was sent to the king Salivahana that a mysterious woman was protecting Srimanta, and the king ordered that the boy should be taken from her by force, if necessary, and executed without delay.

Chandi kills the king's army.

But the men, who tried to apply force, were killed on the spot. Others were sent to their succour. They also shared the same fate, and a vast army, belonging to the king, came to the field. Strange and mysterious creatures rose from underground, rending the very entrails of the earth, some with more heads than one and others without any head at all. Goblins called Kavandhas and Vetals worked destruction on the royal forces, whose heroic feats in arms, seemed like child's play before the destructive agencies unloosed by Chandi. The goblins took the skulls of dead soldiers, and filling them with warm blood, drank from them in wild and horrid ecstasy. They picked up heads that rolled in

the fields, and with human entrails threaded them into ghastly garlands and put them on and danced. The witches cut corpses to pieces like butchers and dressed them, and sold them to new comers of their own sort. The heads of elephants were used as balls, with which a horrid-faced hob-goblin played, and others came to join the party, who like fabled anthropophagi, had heads beneath their shoulders. There, aloof from the field of destruction, sat Chandi like a mother, and Srimanta clung to her like a helpless child, filled with courage and confidence, as is the baby by its mother's side.

King Salivahana heard the story and himself came to the field. There he witnessed this spectacle of destruction, and felt that it was Chandi's wrath that had overtaken his army. He presented himself with reverence and humiliation before the goddess, and worshipped her, praying a thousand forgivenesses.

Chandi is propitiated.

Chandi was propitiated. She restored the army to life and king Salivahana gave his daughter in marriage to Srimanta with half his kingdom for dowry. By the grace of Chandi, the king now also saw the wonderful spectacle which she had created as an illusion to bewilder the father and the son on the waters of the sea;—the thick array of lotuses blooming on all sides and the mysteriously beautiful woman in the act of swallowing an elephant.

Next came the pathetic interview between father and son.

The dungeon horrible and its inmate.

Dhanapati was imprisoned in a horrible dungeon. The prison-house extended two miles in length and was almost without any breadth, and so low that a child could not stand upright in it. The floor was covered with worms. Here in chains for twelve years with the coarsest of grain for food, the princely merchant Dhanapati had lain like an earth-worm. For these twelve years he had not shaved. So his beard fell down to his knees. His nails looked like the claws of a wild beast and his eyes were almost blind with cataract. The foot with which he had kicked the *ghat* of Chandi was heavy with elephantiasis.

By order of Srimanta the merchant was brought before him. Khullana had described his father to him before he left Ujani. The merchant, she said, had seven moles on the breast, and a black mark on the left side of his nose. He was tall, his eyes were large, and the grace of his person was like that of a god. Though so aged and afflicted with unsightly diseases, Srimanta was yet able to see instinctively that it was his father who stood before him in chains. He felt a satisfaction which brought tears of joy to his eyes. He had the chains removed at once. The matted locks were combed and cleansed. The barber was employed to shave the beard and cut the hair, and anoint the body with perfumed oil. Srimanta now asked Dhanapati who he was, and what had brought him to Ceylon. Dhanapati said, "My name is Dhanapati Datta. I am a native of Ujani in Mangalkot in Burdwan. I came here to trade but owing to an optical illusion which completely overpowered me, I brought about my own misfortunes. The tale would be a long one, and you need not listen, sir, to its details. How thankful am I to you, O prince! for my release. If you permit, I may now start for my home to meet my beloved and long lost family."

The father and the son.

Srimanta asked if he had left any children behind him. "I had two wives", said Dhanapati, "the younger Khullana was to give birth to a child, but I could not wait at home to see it born. If a child were born to her in due course, that one must be now a little more than twelve years of age", and here Dhanapati manifested extreme anguish of heart. Srimanta showed him the letter written by Dhanapati to Khullana in which the merchant had alluded to the child that would be born to her. Dhanapati wept bitterly over the letter. It brought to his recollection his dear wife and all the sufferings he had passed through during these twelve years. He implored Srimanta to tell him how he came into possession of an article which belonged to his wife, and if he knew anything about Khullana and other inmates of his house. Finally he said, "the sight of you, dear sir, I do not know why,

has filled my heart with great delight. If I had had a son, he would have been exactly of your age." This was too much for Srimanta, who at these words fell prostrate at his father's feet, and said, "Father! I am your unfortunate son. I started from home with seven ships, with the object of finding you. Gracious Heaven has at last granted my prayers. But how it pains me to see you in this condition!"

Dhanapati worships Chandi.

Dhanapati would by no means agree to worship Chandi, but Srimanta's entreaties became irresistible and eventually he yielded to them. As soon as he offered a flower to the cup of Chandi, his diseases—the cataract in his eyes and the elephantiasis in his foot, were cured, and he became once more prince-like and full of the glory of vigorous manhood.

King Salivahana came with a hundred excuses and entertained the father and the son with all manner of courtesy.

The happy end.

Srimanta sailed homewards with Susila the princess, whom he had married, and with immense riches and a good number of ships that he had received as a dowry, together with the riches and ships of his father, returned by the king with interest. In due time he reached Ujani. There king Vikrama Kesari of Ujani also gave Srimanta his own daughter in marriage. So with two wives he lived in happiness and prosperity, and Khullana's happiness knew no bounds at having her dear lord back. They all lived many years in enjoyment of all kinds of earthly fortune, and zealously did they worship Chandi whose grace had given them prosperity and happiness. In due time Khullana, who, as has been already said, was a nymph of Indra's heaven, and Srimanta, who was the *Gandharva* named Maladhar, both born on earth under a curse—came to the end of their earthly careers. They then ascended into heaven, and the worship of Chandi spread in the country.

The Astamangala.

These two stories form the subject-matter of all poems on Chandi. In the Chaitanya Bhagavata, a work to which we have already alluded, we find that these devotional epics were generally sung at night. They were

generally allowed to take eight nights. Hence a poem in honour of Chandi was divided into eight parts, or *Astamangala*, each part being sung in a night. The poems must have been fairly long to engage the audience for eight successive nights.

1. & 2. We have also a few short poems on Chandi which seem to be the earliest known specimens of such poetry. One we find with the signature of Dvija Janardan, and another with that of Manik Datta. The latter refers to the temple of Dvaravasini in Gaur. Dvaravasini was worshipped with great pomp by the Hindu and Buddhist kings of Gaur. With the fall of their power, the temple of the goddess, where hundreds of pilgrims from different parts of the country flocked to offer prayers, became deserted and eventually in the 16th century, was reduced to a heap of bricks. Manik Datta refers to the flourishing condition of this temple which must have belonged to an age not earlier than the 13th century. His poem also gives an account on Creation on the lines of the Sunya Purana, with obvious traces of Buddhism. We must remember that the later writers of poems of Mangal Chandi tried to identify this goddess with Chandi as described by Markandeya, but originally she had no connection whatever with the Puranic deity. Mangal Chandi was a popular deity worshipped in the villages by the rustic people, mostly women, and the Puranic element introduced into it, is the work of subsequent writers. This will be evident from a perusal of the short poem by Manik Datta which possesses, as I have said, far greater traces of Buddhistic influence than of Pauranic religion.

Janardan and Manik Datta.

Manik Datta and Dvija Janardan lived probably towards the end of the 13th century.

3. A third poem on Mangal Chandi was written by Madan Datta.

Madan Datta.

4. Sarada Mangal is another poem on Chandi by Muktaram Sen—a Vaidya who settled in Devagram in Chittagong. He wrote his poem in 1547 A.D. His mother with heroic devotion ascended the funeral pyre of her

Muktaram Sen.

husband. "This sight," says the poet, "gave me a religious tendency from my childhood. Since that time I have cared not living for earthly objects; hence I desire to write this religious poem."

Other Authors.

Some other authors of poems on Chandi are :—

5. Devidas Sen.
6. Siva Narayana Dev.
7. Kirti Chandra Das.
8. Balarama Kavi Kankan.
9. Madhavacharyya.

Madhavacharyya.

Madhavacharyya's Chandi Mangal was published some years ago by Pundit Chandrakantha of Chittagong. Madhavacharyya wrote his poem in 1579. He was a native of Triveni. His father Parasara was a man of great scholarship and piety, he was also wealthy, and spent much in charity. We find in the poem of Madhavacharyya a reference to the Mughal Emperor Akbar of Delhi who was a contemporary of the poet and of whom he speaks in terms of high regard.

Madhavacharyya's poem was first sung by a glee-party consisting of recruits from the lower classes and he prays to Chandi in the preliminary chapter that she may not be offended with him for their incorrect pronunciation. It is said that Madhavacharyya later on came and settled at Navingaur (modern Nanpur) in the district of Mymensingh. It will be seen that Mukundaram Kavi Kankan's Chandi Mangal is a great improvement on the poem by Madhavacharyya as indeed it is upon all other poems of this cult. In dealing with Mukundaram we shall touch on all the important features of the literature of the Chandi cult, so a separate notice of them is unnecessary. Madhavacharyya's poem was up till lately extensively read in Chittagong, and in the back-woods of Bengal. But the printing of Mukundarama's work has carried it to all parts of the country, and it has now almost driven the former poem out of its

strong-holds in those backward regions where it held undisputed sway for more than three centuries.

Mukundaram Kavi Kankan and his Chandi Mangal

A realistic poet.

We have now come to consider one of the greatest of Bengali poets. Mukundaram was not given to idealism; he depicted what he saw with his own eyes. One who reads his poems closely will find the Bengali home of the 16th century mirrored in his pages. They are full of realistic interest. It is for the intense realism of his description that Prof. Cowell calls him the Crabbe of Bengal, and Dr. Grierson speaks of his poetry "as coming from the heart and not from the school, and as full of passages adorned with true poetry and descriptive power." But before dealing with his composition, we propose here to give an account of his life.

His life.

In the autobiography affixed to his poem he says that he was a native of Damunya in the district of Burdwan. He held some lands under one Gopinath Nandi who owned considerable estates in Pargana Selimabad. Unfortunately for the people, a Muhammadan governor named Mamud Sherif was entrusted with the administration of the Pargana. Under his rule the traders groaned. He made false measurements of lands; a *kura* was measured as fifteen cottahs; and rents were assessed on waste-lands. The poor man's prayer was not heeded. The money-lenders became exacting. Each Rupee was short by 2½ annas. No purchasers were to be found for cattle or stock. The landlord Gopinath Nandi was made prisoner and the poor people became stunned with fear and grief. Lest they should abscond, constables were appointed to keep watch over every cottage. In deep distress the poor people sold their spades and every utensil they possessed. Things worth a Rupee were sold at ten annas. The poet, helped by Srimanta Khan, an inhabitant of Chandibati, and being counselled by 'Munib Khan' as to the course he should follow,

left Damunya with his brother Ramananda. He reached Bhetna where Rupa Ray helped him with some money and where afterwards Jadu Nandi of the Teli caste opened his hospitable doors to the small family of our poet. There he spent three days. Then, sailing down the stream of Gorai, he reached Teywettya and, passing Dwarakeswar, crossed the Damodara and came to the village Kuchuttya. "There without oil," says the poet "we had our bath and appeased our hunger by drinking water. The famished children cried for food. On the banks of a pond with offerings of *Saluka* and *Sapla* flowers I worshipped Chandi. Exhausted, famished, and frightened, I fell asleep and dreamt that the goddess Chandi appeared to me."

Chandi taught him metres and their laws, and bade him sing a song in her honour.

He next went to Arrah Brahmanbhumi, where Rajah Bankura Ray was much pleased with his poetry. He ordered five *aras* of rice* to be presented to the poet and cleared all his debts, and besides appointed him as a tutor to his son Raghu Nath Ray. There enjoying the patronage of the Rajah, he began to write his poem on Chandi which was destined to win for him such great celebrity. The Rajah lavished rewards upon the chief singer who sung the poem in his court, and held our poet in great esteem.

He composes his great poem.

But Mukundaram never forgot the village of Damunya from which he had been driven by the oppression of Mamud Sherif. We can trace his yearning for his native place in the autobiographical account. Though by the favour of the Rajah he now enjoyed plenty at Brahmanbhumi, Damunya where he had owned only a few acres of land and tilled them with his own hands, was far dearer to him by many tender associations. His family had lived at Damunya for eight generations. The village with the noble

His great love for his native village.

* About 3 cwt.

river Ratnanu flowing by it was ever-beloved, nay, sacred in his eyes. He writes of Damunya in the following lines :—

* " Kayasthas, Brahmins and Vaidyas of pure origin,—all honest men live in Damunya. The southern part of the village is inhabited by poets and scholars. The great god Siva by his grace has favoured this village with his presence. He is known by the name of Chakraditya, and the village possesses a special sancity and is visited by pilgrims on account of his temple there which Vrisa Datta (Dhusa Datta ?) erected on the banks of the Ratnanu. O, Ratnanu ! I drank thy water, dear and sacred to me as Ganges water, and from the virtue earned by so doing, I was endowed with poetical talents even from my boyhood and my very first production was a poem in honour of Siva. The people of Damunya are devoted to the worship of Chakraditya. The village belongs to him and we lived in his jurisdiction. Yasomanta Adhikari who is the ornament of the Kanjuri family, Umapati

* কুলে শীলে নিরবদ্য, কায়স্থ ব্রাহ্মণ বৈদ্য
দামুন্যায় সজ্জনের স্থান।
অতিশয় গুণ বাড়া, সুধন্য দক্ষিণ পাড়া
সুপণ্ডিত সুকবি সমান।
ধন্য ধন্য কলিকালে, রত্নাদ্য নদীর কূলে
অবতার করিলা শঙ্কর।
ধরি চক্রাদিত্য নাম, দামুন্যা করিলা ধাম
তীর্থ কৈলা সেই সে নগর।
বুঝিয়া তোমার তত্ত্ব, দেউল দিলা বৃষ দত্ত
কত কাল তথায় বিহার।
কে বুঝে তোমার মায়া, সুরকুল তেয়াগিয়া
বরদান করিলা সঞ্চার।
গঙ্গাসম সুনির্ম্মল, তোমার চরণ জল
পান কৈনু শিশুকাল হৈতে।
সেইত পুণ্যের ফলে, কবি হই শিশুকালে
রচিলাম তোমার সংগীতে।
হরি নন্দী ভাগ্যবান, শিবে কৈল ভূমিদান
মাধব ওঝা ধামাধিকারিণী।
দামুন্যার লোক যত, শিবের চরণে নত
সেই পুরী হরের ধরণী।

Ray, whose free hand bestows charity on every one who is in need of it, the saintly Sarvananda of the Nag family and other good people all dwell in that village. There is besides Isan Pundit, well-versed in the Upanishads, belonging to the Kataditya Vandaghati family and Lokanath Misra, Dhananjay Misra of the 'Bangal Pasi' Brahmin family who adorn our village."

He next traces his own genealogy from Tapan Ojha, a Rajah of the family of the Karori Brahmins and names all his ancestors, concluding the list with blessings on his eldest son Sivaram.

All this shows how, though cut off from Damunya, his mind was yet full of pleasant recollections of its scenes. The river Ratnanu, the village god Chakraditya, and even the temple erected by Vrisa Datta, and the dear friends whom he could never hope to meet again for many long years, inspired his imagination and were sacredly kept in his memory. We may imagine him to look wistfully towards Damunya from the far-off Brahmanbhumi, even as Adam did towards the garden of Eden after bidding it a last farewell.

Towards the last years of his life when the economic stability of the country was improved, he returned to Damunya and there erected a small temple which he dedicated to the worship of the goddess Chandi. This deity was named by him Sinhabahini, the goddess who rides on a lion, and she is still worshipped there. The manuscript of Chandi Kavya written by his own hand was still lately in the custody of his descendant Jogendra Nath Bhattacharyya and I had it copied by a Pundit under the direction of the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat of Calcutta.

কাঞ্জরি কুলের আর, যশোমন্ত অধিকার
কল্পতরু নাগ উমাপতি।
অশেষ পুণ্যবন্ত, নাগ, ঋষি সর্ব্বানন্দ
সেই পুরী সজ্জন বসতি।
কাঁটাদিয়া বন্দঘাটি, বেদান্ত নিগম পাটি
ঈশান পণ্ডিত মহাশয়।
ধন্য ধন্য পুরোবাসী, বন্দ্য সে বাঙ্গাল পাশী
লোকনাথ মিশ্র ধনঞ্জয়।

We have seen a deed of gift under the seal and signature of Barakhan, Governor of Pargana Selimabad, dated 1640 A.D., conferring the right of twenty *bighas* of land on Sivaram Bhattacharyya, the eldest son of Mukundaram, of whom the poet speaks so often in his Chandi Mangal.

Mukundaram, who is generally known by his title of Kavikankan, finished his celebrated Chandi Kavya in 1589 A.D., when Man Sinha was the governor of Bengal; the poet refers to Man Sinha with great regard in the introductory canto of his work.

Finished his poem in 1589 A.D.

His poem is divided into three parts; besides the usual preliminaries in which he offers hymns to various gods and goddesses, he gives an account of himself and of his native village of Damunya.

The contents.

Of the three main chapters, the first is devoted to Siva; this is evidently that first production, to which he refers in his account of Damunya. The sacrificial ceremony of Daksa, the catastrophe that befell him, the death of Sati who was re-born as Uma, and the austerities she passed through in her new life with the object of regaining Siva for her husband, the killing of Madan by the fires of Siva's third eye, the bewailings of Rati, the wife of Madan (full of tender pathos; such as "Let the years that I might have lived be added to your life, my dear husband, do you live for ever letting me die here at your feet."), the marriage, the various domestic scenes in Kailas, the dispute between Siva and Uma, and the worship of Siva by Indra and so forth, form the subject-matter of the first canto.

The second canto gives the story of Kalaketu the hunter, and the third that of the merchant-princes Dhanapati and Srimanta.

The works of Mukundaram contain in all more than 25,000 lines and a considerable portion of this has been rendered into English verse by Prof. E. B. Cowell.

Depicts Bengali home.

The poets of Bengal had been long aiming at a faithful depictment of scenes of their own home-life, and in Mukundaram their efforts reached the high water-mark of success. Like all great poets Mukundaram represents his own people and the peculiarities of the age in which he lived. The human world as he observed it in Bengal was constantly before his mind. Under the garb of the gods of heaven and even of the beasts of the forest, it is the people of Bengal who appear before our view in the characters that he has painted. The beasts of the forest complain to Chandi that they are in terror of Kalaketu the hunter. The tiger who amongst the lower animals, is held to belong to the Kshatriya or warrior caste, the great elephant whose might is fully equal to his enormous bulk, the rhinoceros with his dreaded sword, the great buffalo whose red eyes frighten the enemy away,—all look crest-fallen and humiliated. Their speeches strangely disclose the political life of Bengal as it was in Mukundaram's time, even as the speeches of the fallen cherub in Milton's "Pandemonium" recall the views and sentiments of the Radicals during the Civil war in the time of Charles I.

The humbler beasts complain to Chandi that they are poor innocent animals who graze in the fields and are neither Neogis nor Chaudhurys who own estates. The conversation of Chandi with the beasts, humiliated and stricken as they are by the arrows of Kalaketu, is full of significant hints indicating how the sun of the glory of the Hindu chiefs was setting before the superior martial power of the Moslem invaders, and how the yoke of Muhammadan rule fell upon all ranks in society without sparing even the lowest.

The beasts talk politics.

A dark Chapter of Bengal history.

The period was indeed a dark one for Bengal. The Muhammadan autocrats were making their power felt. In the Padma Purana of Vijay Gupta we find good Brahmins with sandal marks on their foreheads and *Tulsi* leaves on their heads, being bound and

dragged before the *Kazi* and there put to abject humiliation for no fault. We quote the following passage from Von Neor's Akbar:

"When the Collector of the Dewan asks them (the Hindoos) to pay the tax, they should pay it with all humility and submission: and if the Collector wishes to spit into their mouths, they should open their mouths, without the slightest fear of contamination so that the Collector may do so. The object of such humiliation and spitting into their mouths is to prove the obedience of the infidel subjects under protection and promote, if possible, the glory of Islam,—the true religion and to show contempt to false religion."

We have already described how, owing to the oppression of Mamud Sherif in Pargana Selimabad, the poet had been obliged to leave his native village. We have seen how, while describing a fictitious warfare between Kalaketu and the beasts, Mukundaram unconsciously represented the political condition of his country. It is this reality which saves his poem from dullness even in the minutest details of the story. As in the case of the beasts, so also in the description of natural scenery, the human world constantly recurs; and in whatever he sees on earth or in heaven, he finds human society first and everything else in its light. Here is an extract from one of his descriptions of a flower-covered meadow.

The human interest in his poem.

*"The bee merrily extracts honey from one flower and then enters the next, even as does the village-priest, receiving presents from one house, immediately turns to visit the neighbour's."

The domestic life of Bengal so dominated his imagination, that even looking at the gay flower with the bee upon it, the poet

* এক ফুলে মকরন্দ, পান করি সানন্দ
ধায় অলি অপর কুসুমে।
এক ঘরে পেয়ে মান, গ্রামযাজি দ্বিজ যান
অন্য ঘরে আপন সম্ভ্রমে।

is reminded of the Brahmin priest! Cowell justly remarks "Wherever he may place his scenes, in Siva's heaven or India or Ceylon, Mukundaram never loses sight of Bengal. He carries everywhere the village life of his own early days."

In a few touches he often calls up a picture or a scene which seems to throb with life. Kalaketu the hunter, when a boy, is introduced to us by the poet in the following passage:—

Kalaketu as a boy.

"His mouth, eyes, ears and nose were as fine as if they had been carved by a chisel, and his arms were as strong as iron-bars. On his forehead he wore an ornament called *Kapaltati*. A tiger's claw hung on his breast. He used to besmear his body with the red dust of the play-ground. Amongst the children he looked like their chief. One who attempted to wrestle with him was treated to a hundred blows,—in fact, it soon became a question of life and death with his antagonist. If any one of his comrades, who were no match for him in strength, persisted in wrestling, in spite of his evident inferiority, Kalaketu would throw him to the ground with great force, and no one dared to challenge him after such an experience. With his companions he marched out to hunt the hare; if the

* নাক মুখ চক্ষু কাণ, কুন্দে যেন নিরমান
দুই বাহু লোহার সাবল।
* * * *
বিচিত্র কপালপটী, গলায় জালের কাঁটি
কর যোড়া লোহার শিকলি।
বুক শোভে ব্যাঘ্র নখে, অঙ্গে রাঙ্গা ধূলি মাখে
কটিতটে শোভয়ে ত্রিবলী।
দুই চক্ষু যেন নাটা, খেলে দাণ্ডা গুলি ভাটা
কাণে শোভে ফটিক কুণ্ডল।
পরিধানে রাঙ্গা ধুতি, মস্তকে জালের দড়ি
শিশু মাঝে যেমন মণ্ডল।
সহিয়া শতেক ঠেলা, যার সঙ্গে করে খেলা
তার হয় জীবন সংশয়।
যে জন আকুড়ি করে, আছাড়ি ধরণী পাড়ে
ডরে কেহ নিকটে না যায়।

animals fled, there was no escape from the dogs that he let loose to pursue them. With infallible aim, he threw iron-balls at birds who fell to the ground where our hero caught them and bound with creepers. He hung the burden on his shoulders and returned home with his booty."

A contrast.

The descriptions are refreshing, for they offer a contrast to those copied in the Bengali poems of the period from the stereotyped accounts of men and women, to be found in the latter-day Sanskrit works.

A social gathering.

Mukundaram's description of a social gathering is always endowed with life-like vividness. Dhanapati was giving precedence to Chand as a *Kulina* in an assembly of his caste-men. The poet thus describes the scene.

"So he (Dhanapati) weighing all points in his mind, offered water first to Chand the merchant. He put the sandal-mark on his forehead and hung the garland of honour about his neck. At this stage, Sankha Datta said, 'In the assembly of merchants, the place of precedence has always been mine. Your head seems to be turned by your riches, you do not pay me the respect that I deserve. On the *Sraddha* ceremony of the father of Dhusa Datta, sixteen hundred persons belonging to the Bania caste were present and the first seat of honour was given to me. Dhusa Datta knows it well and Chand may have heard of it too."

সঙ্গে শিশুগণ ফিরে, শশাক তাড়িয়ে ধরে
দূরে গেলে ধরায় কুক্কুরে।
বিহঙ্গম বাঁটুলে বিন্ধে, লতায় জড়িয়ে বাঁধে
স্কন্ধে ভার বীর আইসে ঘরে॥

* এমন বিচার সাধু করি মনে মনে।
আগে জল দিল চাঁদ বেণের চরণে॥
কপালে চন্দন দিয়া মালা দিল গলে।
এমন সময়ে শঙ্খ দত্ত কিছু বলে॥
বণিক সভায় আমি আগে পাই মান।
সম্পদে মাতিয়া নাহি কর অবধান॥
যে কালে বাপের কর্ম্ম কৈল ধুস দত্ত।
তাহার সভায় বেণে ছিল ষোলশত॥

Hearing this Dhanapati said, "But in that assembly Chand was not present. In point of social position in the respect that he commands, and for his wealth, who is there that can bear a comparison with him? Even in the outer apartments of his mansion, there are seven jars filled with gold." Nilambara Das smiled at this and said, "A new discovery indeed! Is precedence in caste obtained by wealth? The widows of his six sons bemoan their lot in his desolate house. With all his riches I count Chand as nothing but a bull in this assembly!" Chand retorted, "I know you well, Nilambara Das; will you gentlemen, present here, kindly bear with me for a moment while I relate to you the history of his father! His father used to sell myrobalans. The scum of the city were his purchasers. He would openly mix with harlots, and then without even cleansing himself by a bath he would sit down to eat. He was so great a miser, that he stowed his cowrie bundles here, there and everywhere. Son of such a worthy father, you are not ashamed, O Nilambara, to talk aloud in a meeting like this?" Nilambara Das did not look at Chand,

ষোলশতের আগে শঙ্খ দত্ত পাইল মান।
ধুসদত্ত জানে ইহা চন্দ্র মতিমান॥
ইহা শুনি ধনপতি করিল উত্তর।
সেই কালে নাহি ছিল চাঁদ সদাগর॥
ধনে মানে কুলে শীলে চাঁদ নহে বাঁকা।
বাহির মহলে যার সাত ঘড়াই টাকা॥
ইহা শুনি হাসি কহে নীলাম্বর দাস।
ধন হেতু হয় কিবা কুলের প্রকাশ॥
ছয় বধূ যার ঘরে নিবসয়ে রাঁড়।
ধন হেতু চাঁদ বেণে সভা মধ্যে বাঁড়॥
চাঁদ বলে তোরে জানি নীলাম্বর দাস।
তোমার বাপের কিছু শুন ইতিহাস॥
হাটে হাটে তোর বাপ বেচিল আমলা।
যতন করিয়া তাহা কিনিত অবলা॥
নিরন্তর হাতা হাতি বারবধূর সনে।
নাহি স্নান করি বেটা বসিত ভোজনে॥
কড়ির পুঁটলী সে বাঁধিত তিন ঠাঁই।
সভা মধ্যে কহ কথা কিছু মনে নাই॥

in his contempt, but turned towards Ram Ray who was his son-in-law, and said, "What fault can there be in one's plying his trade? Is not the keeping of cowrie bundles a legitimate function for all of us who belong to the Bania caste? He continued. "If the question of caste is to rise at all, why not take into account the case of Dhanapati himself? His wife tended the sheep in the fields. Is this not a great stigma on him?"

I am afraid the translation will not give any adequate idea of the animation which characterises this controversy in the original. In the discussion, points are brought home in colloquial dialect, by references to matters pertaining to caste-honour and this point is not likely to be appreciated by non-Hindu readers, but in it nevertheless lies the realistic interest of the passage.

A description of the spring.

In the description of the spring-season which adorns the forest with fresh leaves and flowers, the poet ushers in the fair damsel Khullana who has just entered her teens, with singular poetic effect. Her lovely presence enlivens the whole scene, adorned as this is with all the gay blossoms around her. Everything becomes part of a lovely romance, showing that our poet, though trained in the school of realistic poetry, had yet access to the land of the lotus.

*"With Kamadeva (the god of love) as a companion, the spring season entered the woods. The damsel was taken by

নীলাম্বর দাস কহে শুন রাম রায়।
পশরা করিলে তাহে জাতি নাহি যায়॥
কড়ির পুঁটলী বাঁধি জাতির ব্যাভার।
ঘাঁটো ছোপড়া খাইলে নহে কুলের আখার॥
নীলাম্বর দাস রাম রায়ের শ্বশুর।
ধনপতি গঞ্জি কিছু বলিয়া প্রচুর॥
জাতিবাদ হয় যদি তবে হই বড়।
বনে ভাগা ছাগ রাখে এ বড় কলঙ্ক॥

* সঙ্গেতে মকর-কেতু, আইল বসন্ত ঋতু
তরু লতাগণ চমকিত।
অজয় নদের কূলে, অশোক তরুর মূলে
কামশরে বালা পুলকিত।

surprise by the blossoms all around as she strolled on the banks of the Ajay. The trees and creepers became suddenly lit up with new joy. On the banks of the Ajay, under the shade of an *Asoka* tree, Khullana felt the tender emotions natural to youth. The red of the young leaves on the tree-tops about her charmed her heart and she wonderingly thought that the spring as the first sign of its advent had placed vermilion-marks on the brows of the trees. The joyful bee drank honey from one flower, and straightway visited the next just as the village priest having received presents at one house moves onward to another. Moved by the gentle breeze, the trees dropped the flowers, and Khullana received their floral gifts with joined hands keeping them for the worship of Kamadeva that the god might create a longing in the merchant's heart for meeting her. The southern breeze blew softly. She pressed the *Asoka* and *Kinsuka* to her breast. The *Ketaki*, *Dhataki*, *Champaka*, and the *Kanchana* bloomed on all sides, and the bees roamed in their drunken ecstasy from flower to flower. The *Asoka* tree was surrounded by creepers, she hastened to it and said, 'O my friend, how fortunate you are! You are far more happy than I am.' The creeper she embraced and said, 'Tell me by what virtues you have earned the great love in which you are held! The whole forest is made bright by your lovely presence.' The peacock

লোহিত পল্লবগণ, বাসার হরয়ে মন
দেখি মনে ভাবয়ে খুল্লনা।
বসন্ত আসিয়া কিবা, অটবী করিল শোভা
ভালে দিয়া কুঙ্কুম চন্দনা।
এক ফুলে মকরন্দে, পান করি মহানন্দে
ধায় অলি অপর কুসুমে।
এক ঘরে পায়্যা মান, গ্রামযাজি দ্বিজ যান
অন্য ঘরে আপনার মনে।
মন্দ মন্দ প্রভঞ্জনে, পড়য়ে কুসুম বনে
অঞ্চল পাতি লইয়া খুল্লনা।
হইয়া কামের দাস প্রভু আসিবেন পাশ
ভাবি করে কামের অর্চ্চনা।

with its partner sounded a gay note but Khullana was only made sad by it. The bee and her mate drank honey from the same flower and they were so happy! Khullana clasped her hands and said, 'Sing no more, O happy pair, hearing your sweet hum, I am reminded of my absent love. While your mate is with you and you reside in the lotus, alas, how can you realise Khullana's woes!' Now the humming bees move away, but the cadence of the Kokila's cooings fills the whole sky and Khullana, like a deluded soul, can only tell her woes to the birds."

A money-changer's shop.

From pastoral and romantic scenes, let us by way of contrast descend into a money-changer's shop. The passage quoted below contains a description of the interview between Kalaketu and Murari Sil.

মন্দ মন্দ বহে হিম দক্ষিণ পবন।
অশোক কিংশুকে রামা করে আলিঙ্গন।
কেতকী ধাতকী ফোটে চম্পক কাঞ্চন।
কুসুম পরাগে পথ হইল অলিগণ।
লতায় বেষ্টিত রামা দেখিয়া অশোক।
যুয়না বলেন সই তুমি বড় লোক।
আমা হইতে তোমার জনম দেখি ভালো।
তোমার সোহাগে সখি বন কৈল আলো।
সই সই বলি রামা কোলে কৈল লতা।
স্বরূপে বলিবি সই তপ কৈলি কোথা।

* * * *

ভ্রমরী ভ্রমর, তোরে যুড়ি কর
না গাও মধুর গীত।
সঙ্গে তোর বধূ, পান কর মধু
কি কব সুখের ওর।
অনাথী দেখিয়া, তোর নাহি দয়া
চিত্ত হৈল মোর চোর।

* "The money-changer Murari was a knave, he used to lend money and keep accounts. As soon as he learnt from the voice that Kalaketu had come to the house, he withdrew to the inner appartments, as he owed Kalaketu one and half *booris* † of cowries as the price of flesh supplied by him. "Where are you, uncle?" calls Kalaketu, "Please come down, I have an urgent business with you!" But the wife of Murari came out and said, "The money-changer is not at home. Your uncle went out at early dawn to collect interest from his debtors, the little money that we owe you will be paid to-morrow. You need not wait for him to-day. Bring some fuel and some sweet plums from the woods to-morrow, when we shall pay for them and also clear our own old bill." "I wanted to turn a ring into cash," said Kalaketu. "If Murari is out, I must hurry away, and find some other money-changer for it." "Wait a moment," said she, "let me see what sort of a ring you have." Tempted by the prospect of making a profit,

Murari Sil.

* বেণে বড় দুষ্টশীল, নামেতে মুরারী শীল
লেখা জোখা করে টাকা কড়ি।
পাইয়া বীরের সাড়া, প্রবেশে ভিতর পাড়া
মাংসের ধারয়ে ভেড় বুড়ি।
খুড়া খুড়া ডাকে কালকেতু।
কোথা হে বণিক রাজ, বিশেষ আছয়ে কাজ,
আমি আইলাম সেই হেতু॥
বীরের বচন শুনি, আসিয়া বলে বেথ্যানী
আজি ঘরে নাহিক পোদ্দার।
প্রভাতে তোমার খুড়া, গিয়াছে খাতক পাড়া
কালি দিব মাংসের উধার।
আজি কালকেতু যাহ ঘর।
কাষ্ঠ আন এক ভার, হাল বাকী দিব ধার
মিষ্ট কিছু আনিহ বদর।
শুনগো শুনগো খুড়ি, কিছু কার্য্য আছে দেরী
ভাঙ্গাইব একটি অঙ্গুরী।
আমার জোহার খুড়ি, কালি দিহ বাকী কড়ি
অন্য বণিকের যাই বাড়ী।

† One boori is less than a pice.

Murari crept out of the inner appartments by the back door carrying in his hands scales and a purse for bargaining. The hunter greeted him pleasantly and Murari said, 'How is it, nephew, that I never see you now-a-days? Your conduct is very strange!' Kalaketu replied, 'Uncle, I go to the forest early in the morning to spread my nets, and with arrows in hand I wander the whole day long. Phullara meanwhile sells game in the market and we both come home late in the evening. For this reason you do not see me now as often as you used to do. But, uncle, I have a ring to dispose of. Will you kindly help me with what it may be worth and save me from great perplexity?' With this he tendered the ring, and the money-changer put it into the scale and noted the weight to its last grain. He weighed it and declared the weight to be 16 *ratis* and 2 *dhans*: sings Kavikankan the poet."

বাপা এক দণ্ড কর বিলম্বন,
সহাস্য বদনে বাণী, বলে বেণে নিতম্বিনী
দেখি বাপা অঙ্গুরী কেমন।
ধনের পাইয়া আশ, আসিতে বীরের পাশ
ধায় বেণে খিড়কির পথে।
মনে বড় কুতূহলী, কাঁধেতে কড়ির থলী
হরপী তরাজু করি হাতে॥
করে বীর বেণেরে জোহার।
বেণে বলে ভাইপো, এবে নাহি দেখিতো
এ তোর কেমন ব্যবহার।
খুড়া উঠিয়া প্রভাত কালে, কাননে এড়িয়া জালে
হাতে শর চারি প্রহর ভ্রমি।
ফুল্লরা পশার করে, সন্ধ্যাকালে যাই ঘরে
এই হেতু নাহি দেখ তুমি।
খুড়া ভাঙ্গাইব একটি অঙ্গুরী।
হয়ে মোরে অনুকূল, উচিত করিও মূল
তবে সে বিপদে আমি তরি।
বীর দেয় অঙ্গুরি, বেণিয়া প্রণাম করি
জোখে রত্ন চড়ায়ো পড়্যাণ।
কুঁচ দিয়া করে মান, ষোল রতি দুই ধান
শ্রীকবিকঙ্কণ রস গান।

*'No gold or silver is this, my nephew! It is bell-metal polished with care,—so it looks bright. Per *rati* you may have ten *gandas* of cowries. The price of two *dhans* will be five *gandas* more. The price of the ring comes to eight *panas* and five *gandas* of cowries. Now I owe you for game one and a half *boori*. The total, therefore, is eight *panas* and two and half *booris* of cowries. But the whole of this need not be paid in cash. Take a portion of the price in *cowries* and the rest in dust of rice.' Kalaketu said, 'O my uncle, this is far from being the price of the ring. I shall return it to its owner.' The money-changer said, 'Well, well, I agree to give five *batas* more. You won't find any dishonesty in me! Why, I had money transactions with your father Dharmaketu. But I see that you are far cleverer than your father ever was!' 'No uncle,' said Kalaketu, 'we need not quarrel over the matter. Allow me to go to some other merchant.' 'All right,' the money-changer said, 'I offer you two and half *booris* more. You need not take the dust of rice, it shall all be paid in *cowries*.'

* সোণা রূপা নহে বাপা এ বেঙ্গা পিতল।
ঘসিয়া মাজিয়া বাপা করেছ উজ্জল॥
রতি প্রতি হ'ল বাপা দশগণ্ডা দর।
দুধানের কড়ি আর পাঁচ গণ্ডা ধর॥
অষ্টপণ পঞ্চগণ্ডা অঙ্গুরীর বড়ি।
মাংসের পিছিলা বাকী ধারী দেড় বুড়ি॥
একুনে হইল অষ্ট পোণ আড়াই বুড়ি।
কিছু চালু, চালু খুদ, কিছু লহ কড়ি॥
কালকেতু বলে খুড়া মূল্য নাহি পাই।
যে জন অঙ্গুরী দিল দিব তার ঠাঁই॥
বেণে বলে দরে বাড়াইলাম পঞ্চবট।
আমা সনে সওদা করি না পাবে কপট॥
ধর্ম্মকেতু ভায়া সঙ্গে ছিল লেনা দেনা।
তাহা হইতে দেখি বাপা বড়ই সেয়ানা॥
কালকেতু বলে খুড়া না কর ঝগড়া।
অঙ্গুরী লইয়া আমি যাই অন্য পাড়া॥
বেণে বলে দরে বাড়াইলাম আড়াই বুড়ি।
চালু খুদ না লইও গুণে লও কড়ি॥

Thus Kalaketu's straight-forwardness and Murari's craft are shewn in contrast. Murari hides himself in his house for fear of having to pay an old debt and when at last, getting scent of a profitable bargain he comes out, he accuses the hunter of not having visited his house! Kalaketu is intelligent enough to understand his knavery, but he is above pettiness and gives him frank and cordial replies.

The contrast.

We find, portrayed in the poems of Mukundaram, all classes of our people, from the wealthiest to the poorest, —all ranks of our society represented as vividly as in life itself. In Salivahana and Vikrama Kesari we have types of our great land-owners—those Rajahs whose caprices were equal to their favours,—the luxury of their courts, and the great pressure put upon the *Kotwals* or town-inspectors for any maladministration complained of by the people. In Dhanapati and his rich kinsmen we have a picture of high life, with side-lights on the flourishing condition of Bengal when trade brought hoards of wealth to her people. In Lahana and Khullana, two distinct types of women, we find the feelings of jealousy and envy which sometimes rend Hindu families in twain, and also the great devotion and fidelity which characterise the patient Hindu wife. When we come down from the higher ranks of the Hindu community to the lower, we find our hero Kalaketu and his wife Phullara, representing all stages of poverty-stricken rustic life, but the manliness of Kalaketu and the chaste-womanhood of Phullara exemplify the noble qualities which, with all their ignorance and superstition, characterise the masses of Bengal. The poet was a lover of village-life and did not fail to observe the good traits in the characters of humble rustic folk, whom he vindicates in his vivid sketches. The knaves Bharu Datta and Murari Sil are true types and the maid-servants of the class of Durvala who cheat their masters of money, while entrusted with marketing, and poison the hearts of the inmates of the house against one another, are not even now difficult to find. In

The characters are life-like.

All phases of Bengal life.

a word, all phases of Bengali life in the 16th century from the king of Kalinga with his autocratic temper to Bulan Mandal, anxious for the safety of his fellow *Rayats*, are picturesquely represented. We find in the poem, the crystal columns of the wealthy man's mansion, side by side with the hut of the poor folk having a single ricinus post and roofed with palm-leaves, the hole made in the earth to ferment the rice-water, and the abundance of gold plate at the rich man's table; the deer-skin worn by poor people and the sky-coloured *sari* of gauze of the high-born lady; the *ha-du-du*, and other manly sports of country people, and the rich men's games of chess and dice, together with the theatricals of the period in which scenes from Krisna's life were played. But through all descriptions runs that devotional feeling for Chandi which hallows every situation in life, and testifies to the spiritual awakening of Bengal in those days. This last gives a more than poetic interest in our eyes to the celebrated work of Mukundaram. Though our author describes every phase of Bengali life, he is particularly successful in delineating the miseries of rustic people. Through all the romance of situations that he creates, there rises a sound of woe—a deep pathetic tone and a murmur of grief and wailing, and a gloomy effect is left on the mind of the reader, heightened by the provincialisms of the style of the poems, reminding him of the life of the poor in Bengal villages. The redeeming feature of it, as I have said, is the feeling of absolute resignation to the deity, which pervades the poem investing every episode of it with sweetness.

Devotional feeling.

A few more writers after Mukundaram composed poems on Chandi; we give a brief notice of them below:—

Other poems on Chandi.

10. Bhavanisankar, a Kayastha whose ancestor Nara Das left Rarhadesa (the western Bengal) on account of poverty and settled at Chakrasala in Chittagong. Bhavanisankar wrote his poem about the middle of the seventeenth century. In localities where the poem of

Bhavanisankar.

Mukundaram was yet unknown, works on Chandi of lesser poetical merit were admired and Bhavanisankarenjoyed a short-lived popularity in Chittagong in the latter half of the 17th century.

Jaynarayan Sen.

11. The next writer was Jaynarayan Sen—a Vaidya who wrote his poem about the year 1763. Jaynarayana was a relative of the far-famed Rajaballabha of Vikrampur and was an eminent poet. He belonged to an age when the Bengali language had grown highly Sanskritised and Bengali poets took great pride in displaying the wealth of Sanskrit metres in Bengali. Though in the deelination of characters, conception of plot and in pathos, Jaynarayan is assuredly no match for Mukundaram, yet living as he did directly in the midst of court-influence where a high-flown classical taste predominated and in an age when word-painting and artistic modes of expression were the craze of the poets, Jaynarayan shews a commendable skill in bringing into his poem a great variety of metres taken from Sanskrit models. Here is a passage in which our poet describes the attempts of Kamadeva (the god of love) to conquer the great god Siva.

Kamadeva's attempt to conquer Siva.

* "Kamadeva made himself ready to march on an expedition of conquest against Siva. The humming of the bees was his war-drum. The new purple leaves which shot forth from the trees were his flags, and his army consisted of Kokilas that flew in all directions at the

* মহেশ করিতে জয় রতি-পতি সাজিল।
দামামা ভ্রমর রব সঘনে বাজিল॥
নবকিশলয়েতে পতাকা দশদিশেতে।
উড়িল কোকিল সেনা সব চারি পাশেতে॥
ত্রিগুণ পবন হয় বেগ গতি বেগেতে।
ফুলধনু পিঠে ফুলশর কর-পরেতে॥
ভ্রমাইয়া ভাঙ্গে আড় হেরি আঁখি-কোণেতে।
কুসুম-কবচ হাতে কিরীট সাজে শিরেতে॥
বাম বাহু রতিগলে রতিবাহু গলেতে।
ভুবন মোহন শর হর মন মোহিতে॥

royal order. The breeze began to blow gaily. The god (Kamadeva) now appeared on the scene with sprightly steps; a floral bow hung on his back, and he carried blithely in his hand the five flowers which were his five arrows. There was a crown of flowers on his head, and a pair of flower-bracelets on his arms. He cast sportive glances all around. His left arm lay round the neck of his dear wife Rati and her arms were entwined with his. At this advent of the God of Love into the Himalaya mountains, with the seasons for his gay companions,—all the flowers in the valley blossomed and the Kokilas sent aloft their far-reaching notes. Those damsels who had resolved, for some offence, not to speak to their lovers—could not restrain themselves, but ran to meet them, as soon as the high notes of the Kokila reached their ears. The trees, hitherto bereft of leaves, revived and were clothed with fresh flowers and leaves. The beautiful *Ketaki* flower sported with the gentle breeze. The *Asoka* flower bloomed when the *Sephalika* should bloom. Nature's laws seemed to be upset; from the bough of Jasmine the *Malati* flower shot forth, and from the bough of the *Nagakesara*, by a curious sport of Nature, appeared the *Bakula* and the *Kadamba*. The humming of the bees charmed the ears and the Kokila's high note

বায়ুবেগে সকলে উতরে হিমগিরিতে।
আগমন মদন সকল ঋতু সহিতে॥
কুসুমে প্রকাশ গিরি বন-উপবনেতে।
নানা ফুল ফুটিল ছুটিল রব পিকেতে॥
ছুটিল মানিনী মান লাগিল ধ্বনি কাণেতে।
মৃত তরু জীবিত নবীন ফুল-পাতেতে॥
থর থর কেতকী কাঁপিছে মৃদু বাতেতে।
অকালে অশোক ফোটে শেফালিকা দিনেতে॥
ললিত মালতী ফোটে যূথিকার ডালেতে।
বকুল কদম্ব নাগকেশরের পরেতে॥
মধুকর রব বলি ডাকে মন মদেতে।
কুহরিছে কোকিলসমূহ পাঁচ শরেতে॥
নবলতা মাধবীর নত শির ভূমেতে।
পলাশ টগর বেল নত ফুল-ভরেতে॥

rent the air. The *Madhavi* creepers, the *Palasa* tree, the *Tagara* and the *Bela* plants drooped under their wealth of flowers."

But all this availed not, and we know that Kamadeva was reduced to ashes by the spark that flashed from the third eye of Siva.

We shall have to refer to Jaynarayan in a future chapter and so close our remarks about him here.

Sivacharan Sen.

12. Sivacharan Sen—the author of 'Sarada Mangal' (a translation of the Ramayana) wrote a poem on Chandi. He was contemporary with Jaynarayan. There are some sparkling passages in his poem.

But the list of poems in honour of the local deties of Bengal does not end here. There are many other goddesses belonging to the *Sakta* cult in whose honour long poems have been composed. It is not possible to give any detailed idea of these. But we shall briefly refer to some of them here.

(c) *Poems on Ganga Devi*

The sanctity of the Ganges.

We find a certain number of poems written in honour of Gangadevi, goddess of the Ganges. Amongst the Hindus the Ganges is sacred. When dying, we must have at least a drop of Ganges' water, or we feel disconsolate at the hour of death. This instinct is deeply engrained in the minds of our people. The late P. C. Roy of the Bengal Provincial Service, who was so advanced in his views that at the close of his official career, he retired to England and married an English woman, literally pined for a drop of Ganges' water during his last illness in England, and his English wife has informed her Indian relatives of this, in several touching letters.

Stripped of the mythological account given of its origin, it is possible that its present course is in some measure due to the engineering enterprises of some of the early Hindu Princes, of

whom Bhagiratha, according to the tradition current in the country, was the most successful. The river is associated with the glory of an ancient Indian monarch, but it formed, besides, in the *Pauranic* age the very nucleus of the whole Indo-Aryan civilisation. The Aryans, here, as their numbers increased, apprehended that the strength and the compactness of their society would be lost, if they were scattered all over the country. Probably it was owing to this reason that they recommended their own men to settle and to erect dwelling houses and temples on the banks of the Ganges, enjoining it to be an act of particular merit—so that the whole Aryan population might form a compact community in the Gangetic valley. Those who lived beyond the pale of this blessed region were looked down upon by the dwellers in it and were, besides, required to travel all the distance from their homes, to come to the Ganges and bathe in its sacred waters to expiate their sins. The object of this injunction was probably to keep outsiders in touch with the main society.

The Ganges is beloved of the Hindus, not only on account of the glorious cities that adorn her banks,—not only because all that was sublime and beautiful in the past Hindu history is, in some way or other, connected with her noble waters, but in a far greater sense, for the associations she carries, of ancient saints and sages who loved her and composed hymns to her glory. From Valmiki, the divine sage and poet, downwards, we have a host of these hymn-makers, and the Bengali hymn of Ayodhyaram only echoes sentiments already expressed thousands of years earlier. The Ganges was worshipped because the Hindus found in the majestic sweep of her course and in the sublime music of her waters—a divine message and revelation. In the Gita we have it in the mouth of Krisna—"Amongst mountains, I am the Himalayas, and amongst rivers, I am the Ganges."

Madhavacharyya.

(1) We have dwelt upon a poem on Mangala Chandi by Madhavacharyya written in 1679. This poet wrote a poem also in honour of Ganga Devi. It contains 5000 lines.

(2) Ganga Mangal by Dvija Kamalakanta. The poet was a native of Kogram in Burdwan.

Kamalakanta.

(3) Ganga Mangal by Jayram Das, a Vaidya. He was a native of Guptipara in Hooghly. His work was written early in the eighteenth century.

Jayram Das.

(4) The most popular work on Ganga Devi is the one written by Dvija Durgaprasad—a native of Ula in Nadia. He wrote his poem about 1778 A.D. He refers to a dream dreamt by his wife in which Ganga Devi had appeared before her, and given an order to her husband requiring him to write a poem to her glory. This poem shows considerable power.

Dvija Durgaprasad.

Besides all these, there were numerous short hymns to Ganga Devi by Kavi Chandra, Ayodhyaram, Kavikankan, Nidhiram and other poets.

Short hymns.

(d) *Sitala Mangala—or poems in honour of Sitala Devi*

Sitala Devi or the goddess presiding over small-pox and other diseases of the same class,—riding on an ass, is considered by some scholars to be identical with the Buddhistic goddess Hariti Devi. The priests who worship her, belong to the Doma caste—a significant circumstance, which proves the Buddhistic origin of the worship of this goddess, as prevalent in Bengal. Her form as made in clay, however, in this country does not represent a Buddhistic conception. The Brahmins have traced her back to the Vedas. They consider the word 'Taksan' in the Atharva Veda, and also another word 'Apdevi,' which occurs in various places in Vedic literature, as signifying the goddess Sitala. In the Skanda Purana and in the Picchila-Tantra there are accounts of this goddess. But the block of stone, roughly representing a face covered with vermilion and with brass points fixed on it, which the Doma Pundits carry from door to door, asking for offerings in the name of the deity, does not seem to own

Hariti, and Sitala Devi.

any kinship with the figure of the goddess artistically made of clay by Bengal potters. The latter is evidently a Hindu conception.

Traces of Buddhistic influence.

Poems in honour of Sitala Devi bear evident traces of Buddhistic influence. The goddess is described in one of them as riding on an '*uluk*' or owl. The bird '*uluk*,' which is sometimes transformed into a sage in Buddhistic tales, occurs frequently in the Sunya Purana and in the Dharmamangals. This suggests that Sitala Devi was connected with the Buddhists. In another poem on the goddess, the author (Nityananda) says that no good poems in honour of Sitala Devi could be found in Bengal, while in Oriya literature there was an abundance of such works which could be traced back to the very earliest times. The author describes how he took great pains to collect them from Orissa and compile a Sitala Mangala on their lines, in Bengali. Orissa was a stronghold of Buddhism till comparatively recent times, and Oriya literature, when properly explored, will, we hope, show even more traces of Buddhistic influence than old Bengali literature.

And of Hindu Renaissance.

But, like the Dharmamangals and other poems of the Buddhistic cult, the Sitala Mangals also bear the stamp of the influence of the Hindu Renaissance; and the Hindu writers, who undertook to write such works in later times, gradually gave them the shape of Pauranic poems. The story of King Chandraketu and the troubles he underwent, for declining to worship Sitala Devi, with his eventual surrender of himself to the mercy of the goddess, by which he recovered his lost fortune and achieved other rewards, forms the subject-matter of these poems.

The subject-matter.

Daivakinandan and other poets.

The first poet of Sitala Mangal, on whose work we were able to lay our hands, was Daivakinandan. He wrote his poem about three hundred years ago. The father of Daivakinandan was one Gopal Das. The ancestors of our poet were formerly inhabitants of Hatina in Burdwan, and the family latterly settled in Vaidyapur in that district. The next work, a voluminous one, was

written by Nityananda Chakravarti, who was a Pundit in the court of Rajnarayan Ray, a Zamindar of Kasigaon in Midnapur. Of other works in honour of Sitala Devi we may mention those by Krisnaram, Ramprasad and Sankaracharyya.

(e) *Laksmi Charita—or poems on Laksmi, the Goddess of Wealth*, etc.

The worship of Laksmi may also be traced back to the very earliest times. The autumn is the season for harvests, and in an agricultural country like India the deity presiding over the rice and oat-fields naturally obtained homage from her rural population in this season. In the Ramayana we find the description of a golden image of Laksmi with two elephants on either side pouring water over her head in the *Asoka-Vanika* of Ravana. The goddess in that particular form and position is known here as Gaja Laksmi, and after more than two thousand years, the Jaypur sculptors still make images of the goddess exactly answering to the description of the Ramayana. The goddess Laksmi or Sri was one of the most familiar deities worshipped by the Buddhists. On the door-way of many Buddhist temples the image of this goddess is found in a prominent position curved in bas-relief. It is curious to observe that a class of rural Muhammadan folk of Bengal have, for their sole occupation, the reciting of hymns in Bengali in honour of Laksmi Devi. This function exclusively belongs to them, and their Hindu brethren do not seem to grudge this. In Java, Laksmi is worshipped by the Muhammadans. Alas, the humble agricultural Hindu or the Buddhist could give up the worship of all gods and goddesses after his conversion to Islam but not of his harvest-goddess!

Laksmi's hymns recited by Muhammadans.

Who also worship her in Java.

A long poem was written three hundred years ago in honour of this goddess by Sivananda Kar, who had the title of Gunaraj Khan. The next poem on the subject was written by Jagamohan Mitra, who seems to have

Sivananda Kar and other poets.

been a clever poet. He devotes a part of his book to a description of Siva and Uma in Kailasa and other matters. The last poem of the Laksmi-cult was written by Ranjitram Das in 1806.

Poems in honour of Sarasvati, the Goddess of Learning

The goddess of learning, Sarasvati, was not without her votaries among the early Bengali poets. Of the numerous poems, which glorify her, one by Dayaram Das displays some poetic skill. The book is divided into seventeen cantos and tells an animated story describing how by the grace of the goddess one might achieve scholarship without much study. Dayaram was an inhabitant of the village of Kisharchawk in Pargana Kashigaon in the district of Midnapur.

Dayaram Das

Sasthimangala or poems in honour of Sasthi Devi

This goddess is the presiding deity of babies. She rides on a cat. It is her function to preserve little children from falling a prey to sickness and premature death. As is natural, she is held in great repect by the women-folk of Bengal. We find mention of Sasthi Devi in the Brahmhavaivarta Purana and Devi Bhagavata. Krisnaram wrote a poem in honour of Sasthi Devi in 1687 A.D. The poem as usual tells a story of more or less interest with occasional passages of poetic beauty, and ends in establishing the glory of Sasthi Devi by bringing to a happy termination all adverse incidents by her grace. Satgaon (Saptagram) was in a highly flourishing condition, when Krisnaram wrote his poem; he refers to that historic city in the following lines:—

Krisnaram

Satgaon

* "I saw Rarh, Vanga, Kalinga, and Nepal; I saw Gaya, Prayag, and Kampal and travelled through various cities besides; everywhere did I see Sasthi Devi worshipped with great pomp;

* রাঢ় বঙ্গ দেখিলাম কলিঙ্গ নেপাল।
গয়া পইরাগ দেখিলাম নিবাদ কাঁপাল।

and nowhere in the whole country did I find a city so flourishing as Satgaon, where people dwelt in dense array on the banks of the Ganges."

5. *Dharma-mangala poems recast by the Brahmins*

Pauranic spirit prominent in the poems.

As I said before, these poems were originally written to glorify Dharma Thakur who represented Buddha in the days of the degeneracy of Buddhism in Bengal. A wave of Hindu thought came surging upon the story, however, in later days, and the poems were transformed in such a manner that Buddhistic ideas fell into the lower stratum and the Pauranic spirit became prominent in them. The original conception is Buddhistic notwithstanding, and scholars are still able to trace it.

Mayur Bhatta and other poets.

The earliest poet who sang of Dharma Thakur was Mayur Bhatta. To him encomiums and tributes of respect were paid by all subsequent writers on the subject. Next comes Ruparam who is often called Adi Ruparam. Khelaram wrote his poem in 1527 A.D. and Sitaram Das was probably his contemporary. Sitaram refers to the poem of Mayur Bhatta as having been partially lost or become obsolete during his time, which makes us suppose that Mayur Bhatta wrote in the 13th century or earlier. A manuscript of Dharmamangal by Prabhu Ram secured by Babu Nagendra Nath Vasu is 300 years old, so this poet also probably lived at the time when Khelaram and Sitaram were writing their poems.

Manik Ganguly, 1547 A.D.

Manik Ganguli's poem has lately been published by the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat of Calcutta. He seems to have been the first amongst respectable Brahmins who undertook to write a poem in honour of Dharma Thakur. As the subject was Buddhistic, he

একে একে ভ্রমণ করিলাম দেশ দেশ
দেখিনু দেবীর পূজা অশেষ বিশেষ।
সপ্তগ্রাম দেখিলাম নাহি তার তুল।
চালে চালে ঠেকে লোক ভাগীরথী কূল।

was naturally averse to taking it up, and in the preliminary account of himself, he speaks of the undertaking with evident diffidence and misgivings. Manik Ganguli finished his work in 1547. His poem is a long one, being twice the size of 'Paradise Lost.'

Other Dharmamangals. Ghanaram, 1713 A.D.

We come next to the Dharmamangal by Dvija Ramachandra and Shyama Das. But by far the most popular writer of Dharmamangal was Chakravarti Ghanaram who wrote in 1713 A.D. by order of Krisna Chandra, Rajah of Krisnapur. The poet's father's name was Gauri Kanta and his mother's Sita. The poem was published by Vangavasi Press of Calcutta, some years ago.

The poems known as Dharmamangal are as a rule full of historical accounts which though distorted, throw light on some of the darker pages of our history before Muhammadan rule began. They have this interest, though we fail to see in most of them any great literary merit. Ghanaram was not, however, altogether without talents; occasionally only we come across vivid description of warfare, of the *Darbar* of Hindu kings, and of the wily stratagems of Mahudiya which, while suggesting incidents of the past history, are, at the same time, full of genuine poetic animation. But the poem generally lacks in that interest which good poetry inspires in the mind of the readers. Those who do not specially seek for historical material will often find it dull and uninteresting. Here is a passage in which a wounded soldier—a sprightly young man Shaka—when on the point of death in the battle-field speaks to his brother Singadar.*

Shaka's dying words.

"O brother Singadar, see what is the lot that was at last reserved for me! Woe is to me! I die in nocturnal fight, and

* শিঙ্গাদার ওরে ভাই এই ছিল আমার কপালে
নিশায় নিধন রণে, পিতা মাতা বন্ধুগণে
দেখিতে না পেনু শেষকালে।
গলার কবচ মোর, শিঙ্গাদার ধর ধর
দিহ মোর যেখানে জননী।

at this last moment of life I cannot have a glimpse of my parents and friends. Here is the locket which I have always worn on my neck; take it and give it to my poor mother;—this ring is my last token, give it, please, to my wife Mayura, and say to her, 'you have become a widow'; commend her to my mother's care and tell my mother that I die an untimely death, leaving my poor wife in her charge. Here are my father's sword and shield. My golden chain I leave to Shaka, tell him that dauntlessly fighting I killed a host of enemies, and die at last in the open field. Here are my ear-rings, O Singadar—accept them, my brother, as my last gift and here my quiver full of arrows, which, please, distribute amongst my comrades.' At these words both brothers wept, and the dying man spoke, again 'tell my parents to bless me and forgive my faults, and offer my dying respect at their feet. How sorrowful am I that I could not see them again in life. Prematurely has their unfortunate son to bid them his last adieu. My heart is pierced with remorse that my life has been spent in vain. I did not recite the name of Rama, nor did I offer prayers to the gods or worship Brahmins and Vaisnavas. I did not

নিশান অঙ্গুরী লহে, ময়ূরার হাতে দিয়ে।
কহো তারে হ'লে অনাথিনী॥
তারে মোর মায়ের হাতে হাতে।
সঁপে সমাচার বলো, অকালে অভাগা ম'লো
অভাগিনী রাখে সাথে সাথে।
শুকার সুবর্ণ ছড়া, বাপেরও ঢাল খাড়া
সমর্পিয়ে সমাচার বলো।
রণে অকাতরে হয়ে, শত্রু শির সংহারিয়ে
সম্মুখ সমরে শাকা মলো।
কাণের কুণ্ডল ধর, শিঙ্গাদার তুমি পর
ছুরী তীরে তুষ বীরগণে।
শুনি শোকে শিঙ্গাদার, চক্ষে বহে জলধার
বহে লোহ শাকার নয়নে।
কেন্দে কহে পুনর্ব্বার, অপরাধ অভাগার
খণ্ডাইতে মা বাপের পায়।
প্রণতি অসংখ্য বার, দেখা নাহি হলো আর
অল্পকালে অভাগা বিদায়।

minister to the wants of my old parents. Surely Providence was against me."

The worshipping of Brahmins referred to in this speech of Shaka as if it were a highly meritorious act, for omitting which he became repentant at the hour of death, evidences how far the poems were Hinduised; in fact Dharma Thakur is thrown into the back-ground in these poems and in his place the goddess Chandi has become conspicuous. The poems in fact look like those belonging to the *Sakta*-Cult.

The poems look like Chandi-Mangala.

But by far the best poem on Dharma Thakur, though not so popular as Ghanaram's Dharmamangal, is the one written by Sahadeva Chakravarti in 1740. This writer does not, like his predecessors, treat the subject of Lau Sen's heroic achievements. His poem has retained more Buddhistic elements than any other work of the kind that we have come across. I give below a descriptive list of its cantos :—

Sahadeva Chakravarti, 1740 A.D.

1. Hymns in praise of Dharma Thakur, Bhagavati, Laksmi, Sarasvati, Chaitanya, Tarakesvara, etc.

2. Salutations offered to Jiva and other contemporary poets and to the author's parents.

3. An account of creation,—how Brahma, Visnu, and Siva came into existence. The marriage of Siva. His agricultural operations in the field called Kamada. Chandi appears as a *Bagdi* woman in disguise. Siva and Chandi catch fish. Siva returns to Kailasa with products of the harvest.

4. Chandi asks Siva questions on metaphysical points. They both reach the banks of the river Valluka. Minanath who was in the womb of a fish becomes endowed with wisdom on

মরমে রহিল শেল, হেন জন্ম বৃথা গেল
মুখে না বলিনু রাম নাম।
ব্রাহ্মণ বৈষ্ণব সেবা, জনক জননী সেবা,
না করিনু বিধি হইল বাম॥

hearing the truths that fall from the lips of Siva. Minanath obtains *Mahajnana* or supreme knowledge.

5. Minanath abuses Chandi. The curse of Chandi on Minanath. Owing to the curse Minanath falls into evil company at Kadali Pattan. The saint is transformed into a goat. He becomes himself again through the efforts of his disciple Goraksanath.

6. A meeting of the saints Kalipa, Haripa, Minanath, Goraksanath and Chaurangi. Hymns in honour of Siva and Chandi.

7. Minanath gets possession of a kingdom in Mahanada; the account of the origin of the dynasty of Sagara; Siva in the guise of a *Doma* worships Dharma in the town of Amara. Bhumichandra, the king of Amara, oppresses the Domas.

8. The king is afflicted with white leprosy as a result of his wickedness. He is cured by worshipping Dharma Thakur.

9. Sridhara, son of Ramai Pundit, abuses Dharma. He is killed in Varada Pattan for this act. Ramai restores him to life.

10. The Brahmins of Jajpur oppose Dharma-worship. Dharma appears in the field with his companions in the guise of Muhammadans in order to preserve his followers. Rajah Bhumichandra cuts off his own son's head as a sacrifice to Dharma. The Rajah then goes to heaven by the grace of Dharma.

11. Rajah Harischandra abuses Dharma. He goes to the forest with his queen and dies. The queen worships Dharma and the Rajah is restored to life. A son is born to them; they name him Lui Chandra. Dharma comes in the guise of a Brahmin to try the Rajah. The Rajah kills his son Lui in order to feed the Brahmin with his flesh. Dharma restores Lui to life.

Glimpses of history.

The subjects treated of in this poem strike us by their novelty. The saints Minanath, Goraksanath, Haripa, and Kalipa had figured as great religious teachers of the masses immediately before the decadence of Buddhism in this country. The places Kadali Pattan, Sarada Pattan, Amara and Jajpur were, we suppose, associated in some way

or other with important incidents relating to Dharma-worship. We have no historical information whatsoever as to the form in which Buddhism existed in this country and influenced the masses during the time of the Pala Kings. The Rajahs mentioned in the poem probably belonged to that dynasty. However crude and distorted the state in which we find these stories, there was, no doubt, some ground-work of fact on which they were based. When by the researches of scholars, we are put in possession of authentic accounts of later Buddhism, the stories, we venture to hope, may aid materially in unravelling the social history of Bengal at the period in question.

Sahadeva's style.

Sahadeva writes for the people; his compositions are full of provincialisms; they are always to the point, and are very little affected by the influence of Sanskrit. As in style, so in subject, he shows an affinity to the Buddhistic School. While there are passages in his work which are full of poetry, he always uses plain homely similes taken from common objects.

These poems belong to Pauranic Revival.

All the poems called Dharma Mangal which are treated of in this chapter, bear the stamp of the Pauranic Renaissance inspite of their Buddhistic ground-work. The writers wrote them in Sanskrit style and introduced into them thoughts and ideas which characterise the period of the revival of Hinduism, and even the poem of Sahadeva Chakravarti, which more than any other work of this class, belongs to the people, is not without a touch of the predominant ideas of the time. The poems shew how Hindu ideals gradually rose to prominence, Buddhistic ways of thought in them, being thrown into the remote background. It is for this reason that we have included these works in our review of literature belonging to the Pauranic Revival in Bengal.

6. *Poems in honour of Daksin Ray*

Yet another god and we have done with this chapter. He is Daksin Ray, the god of tigers. He is worshipped in many parts

of Bengal, where tigers make havoc amongst men,—especially in districts adjoining the Sundarbans. The form of this god, as made in clay, is that of a warrior with a bow and arrows in his hands. He rides on a tiger. His first poetic votary was Madhavacharyya, who lived in the middle of the 17th century. The work is called Raya-Mangala. The next poem on the subject by Krisnaram contains two significant lines, which show the god as anxious to receive worship from the country people, to whom he holds out a menace. The poet tells how he dreamt a dream in which Daksin Ray appeared to him and said :—

The god of tigers.

"If there is any one to be found, who does not like your poem, be sure, he will be devoured by tigers with his whole family."

His threat.

So we find in this literature much that is crude, and suited only for a rustic population. But many of its good works, which form a part of the Renaissance literature, conform to a high classical standard, and there are descriptions of great beauty and marked effects in word-painting, which in a subsequent age developed into a high-flown and ornate style,—the characteristic of the age of Bharat Chandra. The worshippers of Manasa Devi and Mangal Chandi were to be found all over Bengal, and many eminent poets were drawn into writing poems in their honour, and these works are characterised by a true literary excellence; but there were other poems, which show a crudeness befitting rustic literature, as that on the god of tigers just referred to.

The rustic element and the classical standard

Some remarks about the Poems

As already explained, the illiterate villagers of Bengal worshipped many gods and goddesses under the influence of Tantric Buddhism, and the Hindu priests gradually took these up, and associating them with the deities of the Hindu pantheon as related

The popular stories presented in a new garb

in the Puranas, Hinduised the whole spiritual atmosphere of Bengal. They connected the fables current in the country with the *Sastric* stories and thus bridged over a gap, created by the loss of Buddhistic ascendency and its traditions in Bengal.

This contact of the popular faith with the new creed, that was being introduced, created a strange force, which is to be observed in a growing literary activity all over the country. Hindus did not destroy, but improved upon, what was left of Buddhism, and the literature of the Pauranic Renaissance, while showing an unmistakable rebirth of Sanskritic ideals, had a place reserved for popular creeds and also for the stories current in the country, which the Brahmanic School presented in a new and attractive garb.

Development not always the rule.

But the whole of Nature does not flourish at the same time; we find some buds turning into flowers, side by side with others that have withered; similarly, the stories of Chandi and Manasa Devi developed into poems of high literary excellence, but those of Raya-Mangala and Dhanya Purnima Vrata Katha betray the early literary stage in which they were left,—doomed to premature decay. The worship of the sun which may be traced back to very early times, has attached to it, a number of poems whose chief exponents in Bengali were Dvija Kalidas and Dvija Ramjivan Vidyabhusan. The poems in honour of the sun-god tell a story in illustration of his glory as is usual in works of this kind. In the poem of Ramjivan Vidyabhusana (written in 1689 A.D.) we find descriptions of the oppression of the *Haris* by the sun-worshippers. The *Haris* were Buddhists and the incidents related of this oppression, couched in the form of a mythical story, have reference, as I believe, to an actual fight between the Buddhists and the worshippers of the sun. At one time the worship of the sun formed the most important factor in the religious functions of the Bengalis. This is evidenced by the discovery of numerous images of the sun-god of great size and artistic beauty all

Poems in honour of the sun.

over the country, especially in East Bengal. But the worship of this god was in later times reduced to the recitation of some hymns only, and Bengali poems in honour of him were not destined to flourish.

Supplementary Notes

TO

CHAPTER IV

As a result of the conquest of Bengal by the Muhammadans and their settlement in the country, a number of Persian and Arabic words got mixed with the dialect current in Bengal. In the official and business life this foreign element naturally predominated. Sanskritic words were replaced by those imported by Muslim settlers. As the Hindus gradually lost administrative functions, the language of the court became full of Arabic and Persian words. Articles of luxury and the customs of high life bore foreign names, and the fact of a conquering nation gradually monopolizing all power, together with all the important and profitable activities, is evidenced in the indelible marks left on our language,—this importation of foreign words having commenced as early as 1203 A.D. when the Muhammadans invaded Bengal.

Mixture of Arabic and Persian words in Bengali.

It is a sad history for Hindus. The words ধর্ম্মাধিকার (Justice of the peace), নিশানাথ (the Town Inspector), পাত্র (minister), সেনা (soldier) and similar words denoting functionaries high and low, which we often meet with in our early literature, were gradually replaced by the words কাজি, কোটাল, উজির, পাইক, etc., shewing that the courts of the Hindu Kings were being thrown into shade while those of the Muhammadans flourished. The word নগর which means a city was replaced by the word সহর; the Bengali টাকা a rupee (from Sanskrit টঙ্কা) when received as revenue by the Muhammadan rulers became খাজনা; the words ভূমি and ভূঁঞা (from Sansk. ভৌমিক) signifying land and land-owner were replaced by জমি and জমিদার. The mansions of the rich and all big buildings were no longer called অট্টালিকা but became known as

এমারৎ. The little earthen lamp retained its old name প্রদীপ, but the word which once implied all classes of lamps became restricted in sense. Chandeliers and the wall-lamps were now called ঝাড় and দেওয়ালগিরি respectively, and so in all departments of life, the very words imported into our tongue by the Muhammadans shew that they were enjoying the cream of things and monopolizing all power. The case was the same as that of the Saxon language after the Norman Conquest. The victors who were placed in power introduced their own words into the spheres with which they were directly connected.

Conservativeness of Hindu writers.

But, curiously, in the vernacular literature of the Hindus, in spite of this common use of foreign words, our writers showed great unwillingness to adopt non-Sanskritic words. In the old literature of Bengal we seldom come across foreign words. In the pride of what Hindus considered to be their own superior civilization, they remained aloof from Muhammadan contact as far as practicable, contented with their own social life and the cultivation of their classical literature. They cared not who administered the country; thus the word শহর (city) is of Muhammadan origin, while গাঁ (a village) remained true to the Sanskritic form. In the village the Hindu element was not sullied by the touch of anything foreign. The word চাঁদ (moon), সূর্য্য (sun), বায়ু (air), পানী (water), ফুল (flower) and those denoting objects of nature and social life retained their original Sanskrit or Prakritic forms—not to speak of words relating to religious functions which remained unchanged. As nearly all Bengali works of the period deal with social and religious subjects, there are scarcely any foreign words in them and only a sprinkling of these occurs in the descriptions of the courts of kings.

The Sanskritisation of Bengali.

This was an age when Sanskritic words were being largely vernacularised, a practice to which we have already alluded. The translations are full of instances of highly artistic Sanskrit expressions as 'কমলাংশুতল', 'অগ্নিআংশু যেন পাংশু', 'চলৎচপলা', etc. A new school

had come into existence, the function of which was to Sanskritise Bengali. Even in the works of Mukundaram who more than any other Bengali poet except Chandi Das used provincialisms in his poetry, we come across such words as মাতৃলুঙ্গ, ঈষৎপাশ, নিম্ন, and প্রবল-চপল-ভঙ্গা. The ingenious similes and figurative expressions which developed in a subsequent period are indicated in Mukundaram's writings though he seemed least inclined to use them. He belonged to the school of the people but owned some kinship with that of the pedantic scholars also. We quote here a passage in illustration ;—

Pedantic style in Mukundaram.

"I cannot describe the beauty of Uma's face. Smitten by its beauty the moon dares not appear in the daytime, for this reason the moon looks pale and wears a blot which men speak of as the lunar spot. The pomegranate-seeds, beaten by the beauty of Uma's teeth, have lost their lustre. The pomegranate fruit bursts when ripe, owing to this feeling of shame." These lines of Mukundaram sound a prelude to the style of which Bharat Chandra in a later age was the finished master. In the literature of this period there will be found instances of figures of speech and clever turns of thought borrowed from Sanskrit, shewing that a new era was dawning on our literature which welcomed art in the place of nature, and valued the rules of Sanskrit rhetoric more than the dictates of the heart.

A new era.

Along with the resuscitation of Sanskrit words, systematic efforts were being made to correct the spelling of Bengali words, which still retained the forms prescribed by Prakrita Orthography. This process, along with that of Sanskritising words, has ever since been going on in our literature. There are many words of Sanskritic origin in Bengali even now which are spelt after the rules of Prakrita grammar; such for instance are the words কাজ, সোণা, কাণ and সাদা which are derived from the Sanskrit কার্য্য, স্বর্ণ, কর্ণ, শ্বেত respectively, but which still retain Prakrita spelling. The

Correction of Orthography.

purists will, I am sure, ere long correct them. In old manuscripts we find innumerable instances of কে, তাহার, তার, which are no longer presented to us in such Prakrita forms. The MS. of Chandi Kavya, believed to be written by Mukundaram himself, shows spellings of words which do not always conform to Sanskrit grammar; but Mukundaram, it should be remembered, lived in an age when Prakrita forms of spelling were current in written Bengali,—when the purists had just begun to correct the Vernacular language on the model of Sanskrit grammar and its orthography. Mukundaram lived in this transition period; he used provincial words which were latterly condemned as unworthy to find a place in decent literature, as often as he used Sanskritic. In the spelling of words also he favoured the Prakrita forms in use, as often as he adopted Sanskritic forms. The charge of mistakes in spelling cannot be laid at his door, as during his time old ways were not given up in our language, and the Sanskrit orthography was not yet fully adopted for the regulation of Vernacular writings.

The five Gauras.

The Five Gauras or "Five Indies," *viz.*, Sarasvata (the Punjab), Kanyakuvja (Kanauj), Gaura (Bengal), Mithila (Darbhanga), and Utkala (Orissa), were formerly more allied to one another than they are now. We find the Bengalis to have been in close touch with the people of other parts of Aryavarta. The old Bengali poems were known by the common name of *Panchali*. This word shews that we owe at least some forms of the old Bengali metres to Panchala or Kanauj.

In close touch with one another.

Sarasvata or the Punjab gave us its Saka era which was adopted by the Bengalis, as it was by the people of other parts of India. The civilization of Bengal—the new learning, especially that of logic, which made the *tols* of Nadia famous throughout India—came from Mithila, when Magadha, its glorious days over, had ceased to give light to Eastern India. With Kalinga or Orissa, Bengal in the past was inseparably associated. Our prophet Chaitanya Deva counts more votaries amongst the Oriya people than in

Bengal itself. So we find that the Five Gauras, as the five influential Provinces of Aryavarta were called, had in the past ages a greater touch with one another and exchanged their thoughts and ideas more freely than now.

Affinity in language.

Vaisnava literature has brought many Hindi words into Bengali. In fact a large number of songs in old Vaisnava literature were composed in what is called Vrajavali—a sort of Hindi current in Darbhanga. This admixture of Hindi with Bengali was due to the predilection in favour of the dialect of Vrindavan on the part of Vaisnava writers. They also adopted it in order to imitate Vidyapati the great master of songs, who wrote in the Maithila language. But the Hindi words occurring in the works of the Vaisnavas cannot claim a place in the vocabulary of the Bengali language. Outside the pale of Vaisnava literature we come across many Bengali words more or less allied to Hindi and other dialects of Aryavarta, the use of which has grown obsolete now. This indicates that Bengali in early times, as we might have surmised, bore a closer affinity than now to other dialects of Northern India whose origin is Sanskritic. It branched off from the parent language at a remote point of the time when the Aryan settlers divided themselves into communities and settled in different parts of the country. So in the past the dialects also were nearer to one another. This fact in the case of Bengali is evidenced by the existence of the following and other similar words in our literature of the 15th and 16th centuries.

" যেতকে, হেতকে, বড়ুয়া, পইঠায়, সুগোধিয়া, সরুয়া, পোখরি, বাবন, দোন, ভাবিয়া (Manik Chandra Rajar Gan), সাশিয়াল, বাউরী, সতাই, শিবাই, বড়ি, টিট, পাকনা সোয়াস্তি (Vijay Gupta); বহিন, শুতিল, এড়া (Krittivasa); আবর (আর), করিযোহুঁ (করিলাম), ভৈল (হইল), বড়া (বড়), হেয়া (হ'য়ে), বহুঁতর (অনেক), হুয়োক (হউক), আবে (এখন), হইমুই (হই কি না), পালটাইয়া (ফিরে), কিসুক (কেন), ভাহাই (ভাই), নক্কাঁব (বাঁচিব না), পিন্ধই (পরিধান করে) [Ananta-Ramayana]; কঁবো, কৈলু, দোহা, আঁইলু, শকুনিয়া, করিলেন্ত, যায়, পড়িলেন্ত, আইবেন্ত, etc. মোহর, চাহসি, কহসি, করসি, etc., নিয়ড়ে, কাঁহা,

তুমি, সব, বাও, বোলাও, এহি, বিহা, চিহ্ন, নিঁদ, কেহ্নে, পাকায় (Sanjaya, Kavindra, Srikarana Nandi and others).

Of the words quoted above, শুতিল is still in use in Darbhanga. The words করেন্ত, বলেন্ত, etc., are used in Orissa. The suffix 'য়া' occurring in the proper names such as শাকুনিয়া reminds us of Hindi. The Hindi word আবে changed into য়্যাবে is still in use in Eastern Bengal. The case-endings as in পরদেশকো লাগিয়া, জলকো লাগিয়া in Manik Chandra Rajar Gan and ঘরকে গমন in Krittivasa and কাঁধকে রুমাল in Krisna Vijay are akin to uses current in Hindi.

Agreement in habits and costumes.

Not only in the language, but also in costumes and habits, the Bengalis of past times were more like their brethren of the up-country. They used to wear a turban and tuck up the *Dhuti* tightly between the legs as the Hindustani people do now. When the merchant Chand presented three silk clothes to the Rajah of Ceylon, the Rajah was taught to wear it after the fashion of the Bengalis and Vijay Gupta thus describes it :—

*"One the Rajah wore round the loins tucking the ends tightly between the legs. Of the other he made a turban, and with the third he covered his body."—In Manik Chandra Rajar Gan we found *Nenga* brother of Rajah Manik Chandra asking him to take his turban off as his mother was dead. The ladies of Bengal used to wear a bodice called *Kanchuli* like the up-country women of to-day. We meet with description of the *Kanchuli* in almost all our writers from Vijay Gupta downward. The custom lingered even up to the time of Rajah Krisna Chandra of Nadia in the eighteenth century. We quote from the Bengali work called Ksitisa Vansavali Charita.† "The queen (of Krisna Chandra)

* একখানি কাছিয়া পিন্ধে, একখানি মাথায় বাঁধে,
আর একখানি দিল সর্ব্ব গায়।

† রাজ্ঞী ও রাজবধূ এবং রাজকন্যারা কার্পাস বা কৌশেয় সাটী পরিতেন। কিন্তু প্রায় সমস্ত শুভ কর্ম্মোপলক্ষে পশ্চিমোত্তর দেশীয় সম্ভ্রান্ত মহিলাগণের ন্যায় কাঁচুলি, ঘাঘরা ও ওড়না পরিতেন। P. 35.

and the ladies of the royal family used to wear silk *Saris* but during festivities and on important religious occasions they put on the *Kanchuli* (bodice), *Ghagra* (a sort of gown worn by up-country women), and *Orna* as the ladies of the North-western countries do." A description of this *Orna* is to be found in many of the old Bengali poems; for instance in a *pada* by Vansivadana we have the following.* "Through a blue *Orna* appeared her beautiful fair face: what if a bee mistakes it for a lotus and stings?" A *Nivivandha* or girdle is also described in many of our old poems as worn by women.

It was the fashion with the Bengalis of the higher classes to wear their hair long and in plaits. We find in Chandi Das, Radha's maidens humorously asking Krisna why his braided hair hangs loosely down his back. We have many accounts of how Chaitanya Deva's long hair was perfumed and washed with *Amlaki* (myrobalan) and how it was cut off by a barber named Deva (according to some Madhu) on the eve of his taking the vow of asceticism. In Vijay Gupta's Padmapurana we find the following lines:—

†"Beautiful Laksmindara's long and flowing hair hung loose as his kinsmen carried him to the bank of the river Gangura."

In Krittivasa's Ramayana we find "the soldiers of Rama fled precipitously, having no time even to tie their long hair into knots."‡ The Bengalis up to the 16th century wore their hair long as the Madrasis and the Oriyas do now. They scented it with perfumes and plaited it like the women. In the 17th century they imitated the fashion of the Muslim gentry—who allowed

* "নীল ওড়ণার মাঝে মুখ শোভা করে।
পাইলে ছাড়িবে নাহি দারুণ ভ্রমরে॥"

† পরম সুন্দর লখাই দীর্ঘ মাথার চুল।
জ্ঞাতিগণ ধরে নিল গাঙ্গুরের কূল॥

‡ পলায় রামের সৈন্য নাহি বাঁধে চুল।

their hair to grow till it touched the shoulders in curls. This is called the *Babri*—a fashion to which the Hindus stuck even till the middle of the 19th century.

The Babri.

The poet Bharat Chandra of a subsequent age describes '*Kusumbha*' as a favourite food with Siva. Present Bengali readers have no idea of what this word implies. In several editions of Bharat Chandra, the annotators observe silence as regards the passage, but in Rajputana, '*Kusumbha*' is an article of luxury even now. It is a preparation of opium and milk which the Rajputs take on festive occasions.

Kusumbha.

Thus a study of our old literature brings to our knowledge various points of community in language, habits, and modes of living amongst those different branches that all came from one common stock and settled in different parts of the country. This affinity can also be accounted for by the fact that politically the five provinces to which a reference has been made, often remained under the same suzerain power. The title '*Pancha Gauresvara*' (or the 'Lord of five Indies') was assumed by the king who for the time being became ascendant among the five powers.

The Five Gauras often under one Suzerain power.

Pancha-Gauresvara.

In old Bengali literature we frequently come across the title *Pancha Gauresvara* applied to petty chiefs by their protégés—the poets, but the word always recalls the high political significance it once possessed. It is a title akin to the Bretwalda of the Saxons.

The literature of Western Bengal had many words which have passed out of the current dialect of that province but the use of them still lingers in Eastern Bengal. The words করিমু, খাইমু, করিবাম, খাম, দিবাম, etc., occur in Chaitanya-Bhagavata and in the Manasa-Mangals written three to four hundred years ago by authors who were born in Birbhum and contiguous districts. And curiously enough, the people of these districts now ridicule the people of Eastern

The dialect of Eastern and Western Bengal.

Bengal for continuing to use the same words. Instances of করোসি, করেন্ত, বোলেন্ত, etc., abound in the early literature of Eastern Bengal and that of the west also is not wholly free from such uses. In Srikrisna-Vijaya by Maladhara Vasu, Daker Vachana and other works of West Bengal, many examples of পিবন্তি, যান্তি, খায়োমি, পুজসি, etc., are found. In Eastern Bengal we find the termination 'ও' affixed to a number of words after the manner of Prakrita, such as মাও for মা, পাও for পা, যাও for যা, নাও for না, রাও for রা, গাঁও for গাঁ, ছাও for ছা, দাও for দা, ভাও for ভাব, বাও for বা, তাও for তা. Occasionally they are met with in the earlier literature of Western Bengal also, as in Daker Vachana "রূপার দোলায় ফেলাম পাও."

Queer names of the Prakrita age.

The men and women in the Buddhistic age had curious names, not at all pleasing to the ears, such as অদুনা, পদুনা, নেঙ্গা, খেতুরি, ময়নামতী, হিঙ্গু, দুহি, দুই, রুই, কুই, আই, লহনা, খুল্লনা, সায়, নেড়া, সমাই, মাহুন্তা, লোহাটা, etc. But with the advent of the Sanskritic age, choice classical names began to be preferred. In Vijay Gupta's Padma Purana along with names which remind us of the Buddhistic period, Sanskrit names are found in large numbers; such for instance, as চন্দ্রপ্রভা lustre of the moon, অনুপমা the peerless, চন্দ্ররেখা moon-beam, মালতী jasmine, শশী the moon, সুবর্ণরেখা gold-lining, রঙ্গিণী the playful, সরলা the sincere one, রূপমঞ্জরী beautiful bud, মদনমঞ্জরী flower-sceptre of cupid, জয়-মালা garland of victory, বিমলা the pure. By far the greater number of names are found to follow those of the Hindu gods and goddesses.

Choice Sanskritic names.

We quote a passage from the same work to illustrate with one or two exceptions, its uniform use of non-Sanskritic names.

Non-Sanskritic names.

" There came a maid whose name was Radha; her hen-pecked lord, she led home like a tame ass, another maiden came of the name of Rui whose bald head was redeemed only by a tuft of hair in the middle; another whose name was Saru, her braided locks were eaten up by a cow, as she had gone to the

cow-shed for lighting the fire; another maid came of the name of Kui, in the hollows of whose cheeks some two maunds of broken rice could be stored; another maid appeared called Ai whose cheeks were high, but the nose sunk deep between them, so that it could be scarcely seen ; yet another maid of the name Sua, so tall that her head touched the top of the door as she came out." *

A list of words.

We give below a list of obsolete words occurring in works treated of in this chapter with their meaning.

In Vijay Gupta's Padma Purana :—আসোয়াস্ত—indisposed, আগল—skilled, forward, সাসিয়াল—powerful, চোপা—face, উদাসিণ—friendless, নবগুণ—sacred thread, সম্বিধান—act of attending খিটে—to pick up, ছামনিতে—in the front, বুড়ি—big, ধাই—mother, মাই—mother, অথাস্তর—pains and hardships, মেলানি—farewell, গোহারি—humble prayer, বাহুড়িয়া—returning, পাকনা—ripe, পাঁচে—to think, আচাভুয়া—a foot, ঠান—attitude, সহিলা—maidenly friendship, ভাওালে—to deceive, পরিপাটি—skill, টনক—strong, সোসর—like, তেলেঙ্গা—stout and healthy, অবস্থা—distress, সম্ভাবনা—property, সুশ্রীত—fortunate, সানে—to make a sign, তিত—wet (from সিক্ত, we have also got তিতিল, derived from the same word; this should not be confounded with তিতা derived from তিক্ত—bitter). In the Ramayana by Krittivasa :—সন্তোক token of favour, নিবড়ে—on

* একজন এয়ো আইল তার নাম রাধা।
ঘরে আছে স্বামী তার যেন পোষা গাধা॥
আর এক এয়ো আইল তার নাম কুই।
মস্তকে আছয়ে তার চুল গাছ দুই॥
আর এক এয়ো আইল তার নাম সরু।
গোয়াল ঘরে দোয়া দিতে খোপা যাইল সরু॥
আর এক এয়ো আইল তার নাম কুই।
দুই গালে ধরে তার ভুদ মণ দুই॥
আর এক এয়ো আইল তার নাম আই।
দুই গাল চওড়া চওড়া নাকের উদ্দেশ নাই॥
আর এক এয়ো আইল তার নাম চুয়া।
ঘর হৈতে বাহিরিতে শিরে ধরে টুয়া॥ Vijay Gupta.

the expiry of, ভোকে—in hunger, লোহ—tears, ওর—limit, রড়—run, কোঙর—son. In Mahabharata by Sanjaya :—আম্মি—I, তুম্মি—you, মোহর—mine, সমাইরে—to all, আগুয়ান—forward, সুসারিত—best, যুয়ায়—to become fit, কেনি—why, পুনি—again, বিনি—without, খেরি—play, হনে—from, আপ্ত—own. In Kavindra Parameśvara and Srikarana Nandi's works :—সম্ভ্রম—fear, সমে—with, পাড়িমু—I shall throw, উপালেন্ত—on. In the Padma Purana by Narayana Dev :—খাখার—ill-fame, কথা—where, এড়িয়া—leaving. In Chandi Das's poem :—চেট্টোনেট্টা—young wives, টাট—a knave, উতরোল—alarmed, বড়ু—a Brahmin student, দে—body, টাগ—thigh, আকুতে—in eagerness, লেহ—affection, ওদন—rice, পরিবাদ—blame, ফুরিছে—to swell (from স্ফুরিছে ; its present form is—ফুলিছে). In Srikrisna-Vijaya :—সহ—recovery, রাকড়ে—sound, আউদর—dishevelled, পোকান—a son. In various other works of this period :—তমু—your, থৈলা—to keep, আবর—another, আবে—now, জাঁঞ—I shall go, পুতাই—son, পোরে—son, বুড়া—old (applied to objects as বুড়া ধনু—an old bow), তেবে—then, করিলহোঁ—I did, মিলে—to be, তাইক—to him সোমাইল—to enter, বিহদাইল—dissuaded, কাঁদিয়োক লইলা—began to cry, ছকর—a boar, নাহা—lord, সুগিঞা—Sugriva, মকমকে—loudly, পিম্পরা—ant, ভণহিল—to inform.

The word বাপু, not in the sense of a son but in that of a father or a guardian, is often found in the works of Vijay Gupta and other poets. In the former poem we find the disciples of Dhanvantari addressing him as বাপু, and the goddess Padma addressing her father Siva by the same word. It is evident that the modern বাবু is derived from বাপু and it originally meant a father as the word বাপ does now.

The origin of Babu.

The words of which a list is given above occur in nearly all the old works comprised within this chapter. For the sake of convenience, however, I refer in most cases to particular authors from whose works I happened to note them.

The case-endings and pronouns.

The case-endings of words and forms of pronouns, the examples of which I find in the works, are also included in the following list.

First person, singular, nominative আম্হি, মুই, আমি, আমিহ, মো. Second person, singular, nominative তুম্হি, তুমি, তুঁহ, তুঞি. Third person nominative তিঁহ. First person, singular, nominative, accusative আম্হাতে, মোত, আম্হারে, মোহরে, মোরে. Second person, singular, nominative, accusative তোম্হারে, তোমাক, তোম্হা, তাত, তোঁহারে, তোরে. Third person, singular, nominative, accusative তাক, তাতে, তায়, তাইক. First person singular, possessive, আম্হার, আম্হা, আমার, মোহর, মোর, মোহার. Second person, singular, possessive তোম্হা, তোম্হার, তয়, তোহার, তোঁহার. Third person, singular, possessive তাক, তান, তাহান.

The plural forms were generally formed by adding সব, গণ, and আদি, as তুম্হিসব, আম্হিসব, রাক্ষসগণ, and মৃগাদি. The verbs in the first person show such forms as দোঁহা, পঁরো, তেজিমে, নোহো (for নহি), দেখঞ, লভিলো, বন্দম, করম, করমু, করিমু, পাঁইলু, দিমু, করিনু. In the second person—কহোসি, দিয়োক, করিয়োক, আসিয়োক, করিহ. In the third person we have instances of হব being used for হবে (as in নিদের স্বপনে রাজা হব দরশন). There are many curious forms of verbs such as পইতায়, আইবন্ত, ভৈলন্ত, করেন্ত.

The plural forms

Trade was generally carried on by a system of barter, but *cowris* were much used as coins, and they were counted in *gandas*, *panas*, and *kahanas*. The Bengalis used to travel by sea for purposes of trade in early days, but during the period of which we are speaking, such practices fell into disuse. The sea-voyages described in old Bengali poems are monstrous fables, but they prove the existence of traditions that existed in the country, about commercial enterprises undertaken by Bengalis in the past, though couched in the forms of romances. We may, however, glean what sort of ships were made in the country from these writings. In the pictorial illustrations of the Boro Budur temple of Java published by the Dutch Government, we find numerous pictures of ships which went to that Island from Tamluk, Chittagong and the sea-coasts of Orissa and Gujarat, and they represent a type on which, even yet, the modern European sailing-ships have not noticeably

Navigation for trade.

improved. In old Bengali literature we find that oarsmen and pilots were generally recruited from Eastern Bengal. Their peculiar accent was a subject of ridicule to poets then as now. The oarsmen were supervised by *Gavurs*, who would occasionally beat them with rods called *Dangas*, if found to be lagging in their work. The oarsmen used to sing a chorus as they plied their oars ; such songs were called ' *Sari*.' The Madhukar or the head-ship on board which a great merchant or king embarked, was adorned with many artistic designs. The prow especially was formed into various picturesque shapes; it often represented the form of a peacock. The vessels were loaded with utensils of bell-metal made in various patterns, muslin and other fine stuffs, shells and corals, and various agricultural products of Bengal. The vessels bore poetic names such as ' The Sea-foam,' ' The Royal Duck,' ' The Moon light.' The descriptions of places, though mere old wives' tales entitled to little credence, have still some grains of truth in them. Of the Ceylonese, it is said that if their parents die, they keep them long without cremation. This refers to the custom of the Buddhists who sometimes allow even a whole year to pass before the corpse of a monk is cremated. In another place we find ' If they die, the son has no claim, but the sister's son inherits the property '—a custom which is still observed in the Southern Presidency amongst the Nairs. Sea-voyages as described in the earliest Manasa Mangals seem to represent facts, though much distorted and exaggerated, but in later versions, we find the accounts turned into complete fiction from which it is impossible to gather any historical truth.

Old Bengali literature treated with neglect.

The works mentioned in this chapter represent only a small portion of the literature actually written in Bengal between the 13th and 18th centuries.* As most of these are in the form of old manuscripts and as search for them has been commenced only lately,

* We have not included the works by Vaisnava authors of this period in our list.

and that in a half-hearted way by scholars who have no funds to conduct the work vigorously, by far the greater portion of this literature had been lost before any attempt was made to preserve it, and of existing manuscripts not a tithe could be recovered for want of funds. The enlightened section of our community who are fond of displaying their erudition in English literature, who are never weary of admiring a Cordelia, a Haidee or even a Donna Julia, and who quote from the English translation of Virgil to show their appreciation of Dido's love, would not care to read the story of Behula—the bride of Laksmindara, whose unflinching resolution and sufferings for love rise higher than many a martyrdom; or of Khullana, the loving damsel of Ujani, whose beauty, tender age, sufferings and fidelity all combine to make her one of the finest creations of poetic fancy; or of Ranjavati—the wife of King Karna Sen of Maynagarh whose resignation was as great as her austerities that stripped even death at the stake of its natural horrors. The name of a Shelley, a Victor Hugo, or an Alfred de Musset evokes in the minds of enlightened Bengalis feelings of great admiration, but they do not care to know who were Chandi Das, Mukundaram and Krittivasa. The ears charmed by the beauty of Iambic and Trochaic measures would not stoop to favour the *Payarâ* and the *Tripadi Chhandas* of the old Bengali poems. Yet it is their own literature which contains elements that they are naturally best fitted to appreciate, and their appreciation of the romantic motives of European literature is apt to be fraught with disastrous results to our society which, under its peculiar constitution, leaves no room for the betrothed pair to have the slightest share in the mutual choice.

Manuscripts lost to us.

As a natural consequence of this neglect, a large number of valuable manuscripts has been allowed to be eaten by worms or destroyed by fire, unknown and unheeded. The Battala Printing Agencies of Calcutta, which have undertaken to minister to the literary wants of a rustic folk, have preserved a considerable portion of them by printing them on paper of very inferior quality,

the printer's devil having freely distorted and tampered with the readings. Yet, though meagre in number and poor in execution, the Battala Presses have preserved what otherwise would have met with a certain destruction, and though late we have now risen to a consciousness of the gratitude which we owe to them for this invaluable service.

The laudable efforts of Battala.

CHAPTER V

The Literature of the Vaisnavas

I. Vaisnavism in Bengal.
II. The Life and Teachings of Chaitanya Deva.
III. Vaisnava Biographies :
 (a) Karcha or Notes by Govinda Das.
 (b) Chaitanya Bhagavata by Vrindavan Das.
 (c) Chaitanya Mangal by Jayananda.
 (d) Chaitanya Charitamrita by Krisna Das Kaviraj.
 (e) Chaitanya Mangal by Lochan Das.
 (f) Brief accounts of Nityananda Advaitacharyya—Narottam Das—Raghunath Das—Rupa—Sanatana—Srinivas Acharyya—Hari Das and other Vaisnava devoteen.
 (g) Bhakti Ratnakara and other biographical works.
IV. Theological books.
V. The Padas or Songs of the Vaisnavas.

1. Vaisnavism in Bengal.

Chronological order not followed.

Chronologically speaking, a considerable portion of the Literature, which forms the subject-matter of this chapter, precedes works treated of in the last chapter. But as the Vaisnava Literature is marked by distinct characteristics of its own and has little relation to the spirit that predominates in the rest of our Literature, we have found it convenient to group the works of Vaisnava writers together and to deal with them separately in the present chapter, without observing their chronological order, in relation to non-Vaisnava works.

The excellence of Vaisnava Literature.

Works written by the Vaisnavas form the most important and interesting portion of our literature. They cover a varied field and contain the finest examples of poetry that are to be found in our language, and are no less important for their lofty spiritual tone inspired by the great personality of Chaitanya Deva than

for the influence they have exerted on our language in all its different channels.

A contrast with the works of classical writers.

In the literature dealt with in the last chapter, we marked the hand of classical writers, who had recast the earlier recensions of rustic poems after Sanskritic models. This literature of renaissance is permeated by a taste for classical figures and classical allusions. Words are recovered from the loose Prakrita to which they had degenerated, and restored to their original Sanskrit forms. Reformed Hindus took up subjects of Buddhistic origin, cast them into the mould of their own new ideas, Hinduized their spirit and Sanskritised their language. The Vaisnava literature, however, is essentially a literature of the people. This 'people' should not be identified with those rustic folk whose language was the hated *patois* and the subjects of whose songs were fables and stories in which facts were distorted or over-coloured without any artistic sense. The people who created Vaisnava Literature had warred against orthodoxy and priest-craft. They had risen out of the stupor of ignorance of ages and become conscious of a new strength. A god-man had lived in their midst and in the living example before them, they had witnessed the fulfilment of the spiritual ideal of their country, greater than what scholars could teach or poets represent with all the inspiration of their language. The freedom and latitude of their literary attempts startle us by their boldness, as they attract us by their novelty.

A spirit of revolt against orthodoxy.

Bengal has, as I have already said, evinced in the history of her religious progress, a spirit of constant revolt against orthodoxy. Whenever an institution, basing itself on the dogmas of monastic pedants, has shut its portals against the immutable truths of nature and tried to blindfold men by learning and logic, the heterodox elements in this country have revolted against its theology and asserted themselves to break the fetters of social autocracy by proclaiming true relation in which man stands

to God and to his fellowmen. It was this spirit which had at one time made Bengal a staunch votary of the Buddhistic creed; it was for this reason that the Jain Tirthankaras had found it a suitable soil for the promulgation of their doctrines; and last but not least the Vaisnavas of Bengal shewed the strength that lay dormant in her masses, a strength which by a Herculean application of its resources upset the whole social fabric, broke through the thick walls of time-honoured institutions, and open up a vista for the passage of heaven's light.

The development of the creed of love.

This great strength of the people had been silently gathering itself in the declining days of Buddhism, when the Vaisnava creed had not yet assumed a new shape in Bengal. The Mahayana School of the Buddhists had branched itself in a hundred ways and the theory of the void (*Sunyavada*), though it occasionally led to scepticism and sophistry, counted a large number of votaries who developed a creed of devotion not unlike the Vaisnava idea of love. Some of the scholarly Mahayanists went a step further than Nagarjuna, the great promoter of the creed and founder of the Madhyamic School, and argued like atheists. This class earned for the Buddhists, the common name of sceptics in the country. But amongst the masses Mahayanism gave rise to the worship of a hundred deities like that of Prajna Paramita, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri, whose images have so many points in common with those of Vasudeva and other gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon.

Mahayanism and Vaisnavism.

Says Kern in his Manual of Buddhism,[1]—"Mahayanism lays a great stress on devotion, in this respect as in many others harmonising with the current of feeling in India which led to the growing influence of *Bhakti*. It is by that feeling of fervent devotion combined with the preaching of active compassion that the creed enlisted the sympathy of numerous millions of

[1] P. 124.

people." Mahayanism in its higher theology professed doctrines not unlike those promulgated by the great Sankaracharyya. It bore a distinct affinity to Hinduism in its popular forms also. According to Kern, "Mahayanism is much indebted to the Bhagavata Gita and more even to Saivism."[1] The Buddhist masses had therefore developed an emotional creed which led them afterwards to accept the tenets of Vaisnavism with such cordiality. The '*Nam Sankirtan*' or the recitation of God's name which forms one of the most essential points in the Vaisnava creed was also prevalent amongst these Mahayana Buddhists with whom the "void" was sometimes contemplated as merely a name.

The lay Buddhist society furnishing a recruiting ground for the Vaisnavas.

When Buddhism ceased to be a living-force, a great number of people who had adhered to that faith lost all social prestige in the country. They became out-castes—the Hindu revivalists having refused to admit them to their society. These people readily responded to the brotherly call of the Vaisnavas and gathered under the flag of Nityananda—the great apostle of Chaitanyism in Bengal in the sixteenth century. Thus the Bauls, the Nera Neris, the Sahajiyas and the sects that afterwards went by the name of Karta Bhajas and Kisori Bhajaks, who had originally formed the bulk of the Buddhist masses, now swelled the ranks of the lay Vaisnavas. Some of these people still uphold the doctrines of the Mahayanists though they outwardly profess Chaitanyism. The Mahima Dharmis of Orissa have a vast literature which promulgate the doctrines of Chaitanya and Nagarjuna alike. In some works of this class such as those of the Oriya poets Chaitanya Das and Jagannath Das who flourished in the sixteenth century and are popularly known as Vaisnava poets, the creed of Madhyamic Mahayanism is elaborately explained without any excuse, and the names of Dharma (Prajna Paramita), and of Buddha are of frequent occurrence in them. Indeed one poet

1 P. 122.

went so far as to give an account of the five Dhyani Buddhas on the lines of the Mahayanists, calling himself a follower of Chaitanya all the while. Some of these startling facts discovered by Babu Nagendranath Vasu will be found embodied in his Archæological Report on Orissa which is already in the press.[1] It will be curious to observe how Chaitanyism and Mahayanism have commingled amongst some of these Vaisnava sects. In one instance a religious mendicant of the Vaisnava sect of Baul was asked by the writer of the present treatise if he worshipped the image of Chaitanya. He said in reply that there could be really no image of Chaitanya to be worshipped as he was merely 'the void' and existed only as a name!

Thus the scattered Mahayanists,—who lay like a disbanded army, without any great leader to govern and control them, after Buddhism had been banished from the soil of its birth,—were now brought together and made to accept the emotional creed of love, in its fully developed form; they were thus merged in the great community of the Vaisnavas. The Vaisnavas while calling all people to accept their theory of spiritual love, also beat the drum of war against caste-distinction and priest-craft; and the evolution of what remained of Buddhism in the country to the highly spiritual and emotional creed of the Vaisnavas came to happen as the natural sequence of this revolution; for the Buddhist masses had already developed a creed of devotion being influenced by the spirit of the Pauranic revival all around, and Vaisnavism attracted them most, as it did away with caste—now the only barrier that could prevent them from joining with the Buddhists.

The points of similarity.

What distinction is there between the Buddhist Bhiksu and the Vaisnava Vairagi with his shaven head and loose overcoat? When we read Yuang Chuang's travels—his description of Kusi Nagar and Benares for instance, and read mythological accounts

[1] Archæological Survey of Mayurabhanj, Vol. I, published in 1911.

of Buddha's killing the demons related with a devotional fervour, are we not reminded of stories about Visnu so exactly alike, described in Vaisnava books as Narottam Vilas and Bhakti Ratnakara ? In the latter the mythological deeds of Visnu are found marked by temples, while in the former the scenes of Buddha's conquest of demons are said to have been marked by pillars of Asoka. The religious history prevalent in the country merely changed name when the Buddhist theology passed into Vaisnavism and a careful study of the two religions will shew them often to be as similar as the image of Avalokitesvara of the Buddhists and Vasudeva of the Hindus.

Credit due to the Vaisnavas.

But this detracts nothing from the praise due to the Vaisnavas. They infuse new life, where vitality was sinking. It is true, materials lay all around in the shape of a spirit of devotion and a desire for renunciation. But in the world materials are at no time wanting. It is only when a great power works them up to their highest capacity and leads to striking success that we have opportunities of observing that they were capable of such achievements. Buddhism and Vaisnavism, besides, originally differed in their tenets, one laying stress on knowledge and the other on devotion. It was only when the higher classes of the Mahayanists had left the country, that the Buddhist masses found it possible to accept a leader who preached the doctrine of *Bhakti* (devotion), without reserving a place for *Jnan* (knowledge) in his theology.

Fundamental difference.

The message of Eastern India to the world.

Eastern India seems to have a singular mission for the world. There is no Haldighat, no Chillinwala, no Kurukshetra, no Panipat in this part of the country. No martial feats, no acts of extraordinary bravery or patriotism mark this blessed land; but the pre-historic temples of Benares rise aloft invoking people from

the furthest provinces of India to respond to their high religious call; the Sama-songs accompanied by the evening-bells and sung in chorus by Vedic Brahmins in the holy city carry us to the times when the Risis of old, set their first great utterances on religion to sublime music. The monastery of Nalanda, once one of the greatest centres of learning in the world, opened its portals to all peoples without distinction and drew pupils from every part of the then known world. The pillar-inscriptions of Asoka proclaimed from here the great truths of universal equality, forbearance, and kindness, and shewed the solicitous care of an ideal monarch who was a father to his people—nay, was full of compassion even for the dumb animals. Here, in yet earlier times, lived Rama in Uttara Kosala, whose name as that of an incarnation of God is uttered by all Hindus in the hour of death. And it was here that the great Buddha from Kapilavastu preached his religion which has left its stamp on the civilization of the whole world, and whose influence may be traced not only in the '*Karma-vada*' on which modern Hinduism is based, but even in the Catholic Church of the Christians and in the creed of the Shufis amongst Muhammadans. The Jaina Tirthankaras all attained their spiritual goal in this part of India, and the great temple of Jagannath in Puri, and the educational institutions of Mithila and Nadia in comparatively recent times, have held up a torch which has lit up the Hindu world and led it along the path of intellectual and spiritual progress. Here in Eastern India, sang Valmiki, that master of epics, the deep pathos of whose sublime poetry flows like the noble stream of the Tamasa itself on whose banks it was first composed. Of the Ramayana it has been said :—"So long as the mountains of the world endure and so long as noble rivers flow, this epic will be read."

The apostles of Bengal

The Aryans who came to Bengal and settled here had distinctly a high religious object in view. From Silabhadra, Dipankara and Mahavira to Minanath, Goraksanath, Haripa, Kalupa, Chaurangee and even

Ramai Pandit—the apostles of Bengal all proclaimed to the people the transitoriness of this world and the glory of a religious life. I have referred to the whole of Eastern India, because Bengali civilization four hundred years ago was the result of all these influences combined. The environment of a man shapes his proclivities to a great extent and the Bengal of the 16th century was pre-eminently marked by the influences that had governed Eastern India for ages. Nadia-*Tols* represented a revival, not indeed on such a wide scale yet in a subtler way, of the learning of the Nalanda monasteries. Buddha had taught kindness to animals and a process of introspection by which a conquest over the warring passions of the soul might be gained. Peace was proclaimed, not only with the human, but also with the animal world, and when the soil was so far prepared by Buddhism, came Chaitanya Deva into this historic land of religion, to advance a step further and teach love to God.

Chaitanya advanced a step further.

He taught it unmistakably. The family to which he belonged had for many generations past been Vaisnava which means that they had abstained from all kinds of meat. No fish or flesh could cross the threshold of a Vaisnava family. The word killing is not to be found in their vocabulary; to speak of 'cutting' even a vegetable for food, was unholy with them. They called it রান্না or dressing (lit. preparing). The older phraseology current in the country had been changed by the Vaisnavas. The idea of kindness to animals had reached perfection with them and how can this be explained except as the result of Buddhism which long predominated here? The family of Chaitanya Deva were of an unworldly character. His father Jagannath Misra was very poor. His wife Sachi Devi asked him one day why he did not worship Chandi—for the avocation of such a priest would bring him more money. Jagannath Misra smiled and said he did not care to have it.

Born in a pious family.

It was a family that cared only for the grace of God,—God who was real to the Hindus of that period, and not a mere matter

of speculation as He is to so many modern Bengalis. The life of Chaitanya proves that all the tender emotions of love,—the yearnings of a mother for her child,—all that friendship of man or woman may inspire in the soul, do not represent a tithe of what a man can feel or suffer when he realises the love of God. But it requires the clear vision of one in whom all worldly desires have been extinguished, to appreciate and realise this great love.

He inspired the 'padas' by his love-ecstasy.

Chaitanya Deva became completely lost in his own devotion to God. The poetry that welled up round him from those who witnessed the superb sight of his beautiful love ecstasy, has enriched our literature beyond measure in the matchless *padas* of the Vaisnava poets which will remain as an invaluable treasure to us for ages to come.

All honour to thee, O Navadvipa,—the glory of Bengal! The historic city is now crumbling to decay. Its splendour is now a tale of by-gone ages. But Navadvipa will remain sacred to Hindus for ever. Its very dust proclaims a history which holds us under a spell. For ages it has held a torch that has illuminated Bengal and in the 15th century a heavenly light appeared on its horizon which, moon-like, developed into a glorious luminary; verily was Chaitanya Deva 'Navadvipa-Chandra' or the moon of Navadvipa, as he is popularly called.

Navadvipa, the birth-place of Chaitanya and a seat of learning.

In speaking of the glories of Navadvipa I am not referring to the fact that it was the last seat of the Hindu kings of Gaur. In later times it became a far-famed seat of learning. Its great school of Logic, founded by Vasu Deva Sarvabhauma, and brought to perfection by Raghunath Siromani, drew pupils from all parts of India. The new system of Logic called Navya Nyaya which supplemented the old system of Gautama, indicates the keenness of the Bengali intellect.

Navya Nyaya.

The subtlety with which the Navya Nyaya has been worked out, gives it a unique character and in the brilliant mode of exposition, it may be considered as a land-mark of progress in human thought, and an achievement of which every Indian may be justly proud. This school of Logic at Navadwipa drew pupils from Benares, the Punjab, Poona and all the other recognised centres of Sanskrit learning; so that by the early 16th century the *Tols* or Sanskrit schools of Navadvipa, had become the metropolis of learning in India. Narahari Chakravarty, author of Bhakti-ratnakara, gives a topography of Navadvipa of this period, from which we see that the area of the city was sixteen square miles at the time. It included within this area the following, among other, wards:—Atapur, Simulia, Majitagram, Vamanpukhuria, Hat-danga, Ratupur, Vidyanagar, Belpukhuria, Champahat, Mangachi, Rahupur, Minapur, Gandhavanik Para, Malakar Para, Sankhari Para and Tanti Para. Vrindavan Das, author of Chaitanya-Bhagavata, thus describes the flourishing condition of Navadvipa:

The area of Navadvipa.

"*It is impossible to describe the glories of Navadvipa. Hundreds of thousands of people bathe there in the Ganges every day. Various races of people dwell in the city whose numbers may be counted by lacs. There are hundreds of scholars in it by the grace of Sarasvati (the goddess of learning). There are many professors who are fond of displaying their learning.

Its flourishing condition.

* নবদ্বীপের সমৃদ্ধি কে বর্ণিবারে পারে।
এক গঙ্গাঘাটে লক্ষ লোক স্নান করে॥
ত্রিবিধ বৈসে এক জাতি লক্ষ লক্ষ।
সরস্বতী দৃষ্টিপাতে সবে মহা দক্ষ॥
সবে মহা অধ্যাপক করি গর্ব্ব করে।
বালকে হো ভট্টাচার্য্য সনে কক্ষা করে॥
নানা দেশ হইতে লোক নবদ্বীপে যায়।
নবদ্বীপে পড়িলে সে বিদ্যারস পায়॥

Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

Even a boy there, will challenge a veteran professor to an intellectual discussion. People from various countries flock to the *Tols* of Navadvipa, and when they have finished their studies there, their education becomes complete."

Sceptical tendencies of scholars.

But what was this Navya Nyaya of Bengal? Those who have read the system of Logic founded by Gautama, know that its basis is a spiritual philosophy. But this Navya Nyaya of Bengal has nothing to do with religion. It is a secular system of purely intellectual reasoning. In the latter days of Buddhism, faith in God, as I have said, had become nearly extinct amongst some of the scholarly Mahayanists, and the creed almost identical with scepticism in popular estimation. Human mind in this country after long ages of scepticism and mystic *Tantric* rites,—confounded and stupefied by the supernatural feats of '*siddhas*' wanted to extricate itself from the mazy ways of an old and rotten institution and panted for light and for love of God. The horrors of Tantrikism are thus described by Narahari Chakravarty in his Narottam-Vilasa* :—

Tantrikism and worldliness.

"Who can count their crimes? The blood of goats and buffaloes stains each house. Many of them hold in one hand the heads of men severed from the body and in another a sword and dance in frightful ecstasy. If any body falls in their way, he is

* "করয়ে কুক্রিয়া যত কে কহিতে পারে।
ছাগ মেষ মহিষ শোণিত ঘরে ঘরে
কেহ কেহ মানুষের কাটা মুণ্ড লৈয়া।
খড়্গ করে করয়ে নর্ত্তন মত্ত হৈয়া॥
সে সময়ে কেহ যদি সেই পথে যায়।
হইলেও বিপ্র তার হাত না এড়ায়॥
সঙ্গে স্ত্রী-লম্পট জাতি বিচার রহিত।
মদ্য মাংস বিনে না ভুঞ্জয়ে কদাচিত॥"

Narottam-Vilasa—Canto VII.

sure to meet with death at their hands. There is no way to avoid the frightful doom—not even if he be a Brahmin. All of them are addicted to meat and wine and are lost to all sense of sexual morality."

Vrindavana Dasa's Chaitanya Bhagavata also shews the spirit of the times* :—

"The people are wealthy by the grace of Laksmi (goddess of wealth). But they spend their times in worldly pursuits. Their religious observances consist of singing songs in praise of Chandi sometimes for whole nights together. There are some who take pride in worshipping Manasa Devi. Immense money they spend for making images of gods. They also spend money foolishly for the marriages of their sons and daughters. Thus do they spend their lives. Even scholarly profsssors do not interpret the sacred books in the light of faith."

This was the state of things in which the Puranic Renaissance took its birth, and engaged in its struggle to give the people better ideals and a purer faith; but while the Brahmins did a truly noble work on these lines, their power gradually became oppressive. The rules of caste became more and more stringent as *Kulinism* was stereotyped. While better ideals in religion

The defects of the Renaissance.

* "রমা দৃষ্টিপাতে সর্ব্ব লোক সুখে বৈসে।
ব্যর্থ কাল যায় মাত্র ব্যবহার রসে॥
ধর্ম্ম কর্ম্ম লোক সব এই মাত্র জানে।
মঙ্গল চণ্ডীর গীত করে জাগরণে॥
দম্ভ করি বিষহরি পূজে কোন জন।
পুত্তলি করয়ে কেহ দিয়া বহু ধন॥
ধন নষ্ট করে পুত্র কন্যার বিভায়।
এই মত জগতের ব্যর্থ কাল যায়॥
যেবা ভট্টাচার্য্য চক্রবর্ত্তী মিশ্র সব।
তাহারাও না জানয়ে গ্রন্থ অনুভব॥"

From Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

were upheld by the Brahmins, the gap between man and man was widened by caste-restrictions. The lower strata of society groaned under the autocracy of the higher, who shut the portals of learning against the inferior classes. They were also debarred from having any access to a higher life, and the religion of the new school became the monopoly of the Brahmins as if it were a commodity of the market-place.

The people wanted faith and a great personality to teach it.

The human mind in Bengal, as I have already said, was ready for a great faith. The people were unconsciously waiting for a democratic movement of reaction against the school of religious monopoly. They desired to be taught that an intricate system of rigid monastic rites is not needed for the attainment of salvation. A simple life, with the name of God on the lips, holy abstinence, and a pure faith, are better than all that was ever said by school-men. To say this in a society ridden by the Brahmin as Sindabad—the sailor by the Old Man of the Sea—in a society where theological dogmas ruled over ignorant men with iron sway, menacing those who dared any opposition, would obviously require a unique personality. That Bengal had the strength of producing not only the great man who was needed but also the society that could recognise and appreciate him is fully seen in the life of Chaitanya Deva who was born in 1486 A.D.

Such a personality came.

As the Vaisnava literature to be dealt with in this chapter was inspired throughout by admiration for Chaitanya Deva, and bore the stamp of his influence in all its various departments, I shall here give an account of his life at some length.

II. *The Life and Teachings of Chaitanya Deva*

Chaitanya Deva was born at Minapur in Navadvipa in 1486. This Minapur has now been transformed into Mayapur by the orthodox Vaisnavas who cannot bring

Birth, ancestry and family history.

themselves to call Chaitanya Deva's birth-place by a Muhammadan name. It was in the evening of the 7th day of the month of Phalgun (18th of February) when the full moon had just emerged from the shadow of an eclipse and the air was resounding with cries of 'Krisna' 'Krisna' 'O Lord' 'O Lord' as is the wont of Hindus on an occasion like this, that the birth of the devotee who was to preach the Krisna-cult all his life, took place.

Chaitanya Deva's ancestors were inhabitants of Jajpur in Orissa who, owing to the oppression of Raja Bhramaravara, had settled in the village of Dhaka-Dakshina in Sylhet. Jagannath Misra the father had come to Navadvipa to complete his education and there married Sachi Devi, a daughter of Nilamvara Chakravarty, originally an inhabitant of Sylhet, who was now settled in Navadvipa. Jagannath Misra and Sachi Devi had eight daughters and two sons. The daughters all died in infancy. The elder son was Visvarupa and the younger Visvambhara. They called him, however, by the pet name Nimai, because he had been born in a shed under a Nimba tree. This Nimai afterwards became famous as Chaitanya Deva.

The eldest son Visvarupa was about to be married when he was only sixteen. On the night previous to the date fixed for his marriage, the boy, whose ascetic tendencies had been already marked, left home and took the vow of a *Sannyasin*. His parents rose in the morning with hearts full of joy at the prospect of celebrating Visvarupa's marriage. But what a disappointment when they found that the bird had flown! They received information that he had turned *Sannyasin* and renounced the world for ever. In what cave of the mountains, in what holy shrine, or in what recess of the forest where the Indian Pine and Fir trees raise their heads to touch the skies, the young *Sannyasin* roamed for the rest of his life, has remained a mystery up to now. The parents were struck dumb with sorrow, and there remained to them their Nimai alone—the last ray of light to dispel the gloom of their house.

A mother's fears.

Jagannath Misra, a man of strong character and of a spiritual bent of mind, bore this misfortune patiently; but Sachi Devi watched over Nimai with an anxious mother's care, always afraid lest he also should leave home and throw her into depths of misery. At last this fear became a mania with her. "Since study makes a man realise the transitoriness of the world, let not my Nimai be sent to school. I would much prefer that he should remain at home and be a dunce." Thus did Sachi Devi argue with her husband.

But the lad was as yet only five years old. This was the age when Hindu parents sent their boys to school. Jagannath Misra, however, could not do so with Nimai owing to Sachi Devi's objections.

A wild boy.

Nimai grew up a wild boy. He mixed with the bad boys of the village and carried on little depredations in the neighbouring houses and orchards in their company. The pious Brahmins, after their bath, used to close their eyes in prayerful attitude before small figures of gods on the banks of the Ganges. The little thief would come stealthily along and carry away their images. Sometimes when a Brahmin's *chadar* was left on the banks while he bathed, Nimai would take it away and conceal it under a bush for the sake of fun. The little girls that came to bathe in the Ganges were teased and subjected to his wild pranks. He would collect the thorny seeds of Okra-plants and throw them on their flowing hair. Once a little girl complained to Sachi Devi that Nimai had threatened to marry her. The little fellow was six years old at the time. At times Nimai would step in among unclean and refuse things which a Brahmin would not touch. His parents would find him there and gently admonish him for his conduct. His reply surprised them with the wisdom it disclosed. "You do not allow me to study," said he, "how I am to know what is clean or unclean. Nothing is either clean or unclean in my eyes, all things are alike to me." His words "সর্ব্বত্র আমার এক অদ্বিতীয় স্থান" are fraught with the deepest truths of Vedantic philosophy. They

strike the key-note of their speaker's subsequent work in demolishing orthodox traditions about the sacredness of particular objects. Nothing indeed could be holy or unholy in the eyes of Chaitanya, who had in subsequent years reached the stage of সাম্য দর্শন, when one looks upon all objects without prejudice for or against.

Sent to Ganga Das's school.

But this mischief-making imp could not be tolerated any longer, in spite of his sage-like sayings, and the gentle folk of the neighbourhood went in a body to Jagannath Misra to complain to him against his boy and insist on his putting him to school without delay. Ganga Das was the name of the teacher to whose care he was entrusted. Nimai began to read in this pundit's *Tol*. He learnt the alphabet within a short time and commenced reading Sanskrit Grammar.

"He does not leave his book for a moment," says Vrindavan Das, his biographer,* " while bathing or dining or going to bed, his mind wanders over the pages of his books. The rules he reads he quickly masters, and in discussions amongst students he beats every rival. He wrote a commentary on Sanskrit Grammar himself with patient application."

Yet Sanskrit Grammar was the subject least suited to a student who possessed an emotional nature like that of Nimai. Ardent in spirit, and eccentric in temper as he was, he applied himself, with his whole soul, to whatever fell in his way, and study kept him engaged day and night in this early youth. But he was not a quiet and good-natured boy. As long as he

* "না ছাড়েন শ্রীহস্তে পুস্তক এক ক্ষণে।
কিবা খানে কি ভোজনে অথবা শয়নে॥
নাহিক প্রভুর আর চেষ্টা শাস্ত্র বিনে।
একবার যে সূত্র পড়িয়া প্রভু যায়॥
আর বার উলটিয়া সবারে ঠকায়।
আপনি করেন প্রভু সূত্রের টিপ্পনি॥"

Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

remained engaged in his studies, he restrained himself. During recreation-hours, he gave free scope to his eccentricities.

Assails veteran scholars.

Murari Gupta, an aged scholar, highly esteemed for his character and learning, and a Vaidya or physician by caste, was passing by, one day, when young Nimai met and accosted him with smiling face. "Will you sir," said he, "kindly clear up some difficulties of mine in grammar." The veteran scholar liked the child for his handsome appearance and for his talent. He proceeded to explain the passages required, but Nimai had not approached him in the spirit of a *bona-fide* student. He wanted to puzzle the old scholar. In the discussion, that followed, Murari was completely beaten, and young Nimai triumphantly made some very impertinent remarks.* "You are a Vaidya. Why should you read Sanskrit Grammar at all? It is a very difficult thing to master this science. It is not like books that teach how to prescribe medicine for cough, biles and indigestion."

Not only in Sanskrit Grammar but in Logic too he shewed particular proficiency. Gadadhara, a great scholar in Logic, was once challenged by him to a free discussion on several knotty problems in that science, and had to admit that he was no match for Nimai.

Ridicules East Bengal men.

The people of Navadvipa loved the young scholar. He was so handsome, so brilliant, and so affectionate of disposition, yet withal so wild! The people of Western Bengal have always felt a delight in ridiculing the peculiar accents of the men of Eastern Bengal. Among the youths of Navadvipa, Chaitanya Deva was the foremost in ridiculing these people for this defect. The people of Sylhet were

* "প্রভু কহে বৈদ্য তুমি ইহা কেন পড়।
লতা পাতা লৈয়া গিয়া রোগ দূর কর॥
ব্যাকরণ শাস্ত্র এই বিষম অবধি।
কফ, পিত্ত, অজীর্ণ, ব্যবস্থা নাহি ইথি॥"

Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

specially marked out by Nimai for his jokes. He teased them till they became enraged. One of them with angry looks asked him—"You sir, can you say to which country you belong? Is it not a fact that your father and mother were born in Sylhet?" This was quite true, for his parents had come from Sylhet, a remote place in Eastern Bengal, and settled at Navadvipa. But fair argument was not the object of Nimai bent on provoking them to anger; and angry they became till one pursued him with a club, and another went to the *Kaji* to lodge a complaint against him.

Sets up a *Tol*.

Nimai set up a *Tol* or Sanskrit School himself at the age of twenty. His reputation as a scholar was already well-established and pupils flocked from all quarters to receive instruction from him. His mode of teaching and his treatment of scholars soon made him very popular amongst them.

Kesava Kasmiri visits Navadvipa.

About this time, there came to Navadvipa, a renowned scholar named Kesava Kasmiri. In the middle ages when learning was the chief object of admiration with the middle classes, and hundreds of scholars were taught in various centres of Sanskrit learning all over India any one who acquired special proficiency in a particular subject made it the mission of his life to travel to the various seats of learning, challenging scholars to free controversy. If he could win his laurels in this competition, he naturally enjoyed great esteem in the country and the scholars who were vanquished acknowledged the fact of their defeat in an open letter presented to him. This letter was called 'জয়-পত্র' or letter of victory.

Kesava Kasmiri after having vanquished the scholars of the rest of India had come to Navadvipa, then the most important seat of Sanskrit learning in the country. There were veteran scholars at Navadvipa about this time: old Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, the first authority in Logic in India; Raghu Nandan Bhattacharya whose jurisprudence up till now governs Hindu society in Bengal; and Raghu Nath Siromani whose grand work, Chintamani Didhiti, a commentary on the Tattva Chintamani by Gangesa

Upadhyaya, is a monument of scholarship, and excelled the treatise it commented on, were all living. These were the intellectual giants of their period. But they were scholarly recluses who for many years had scarcely mixed with men. The people of Navadvipa, however, were proud of the scholarship of young Nimai, who was always eager to enter into controversy with others. They brought the veteran Kesava to Nimai who received him cordially on the bank of the Ganges, where his *Tol* was situated.

Nimai asked Kesava Kasmiri, himself, a reputed poet, to describe the Ganges as it flowed past in an *extempore* poem. A few moments passed, and like a noble stream, rich and rhythmical flow of verses fell from the lips of the old scholar to the wonder of the pupils of the *Tol*, and he surprised the audience by the brilliance of his metaphors and the sublimity and beauty of his ideas. Nimai noted the poem in his memory. His assailant, after delivering it, looked round in haughty pride, and said to Nimai, "You have learned Grammar only, I hear, and have no knowledge of Rhetoric. It is not in your power to appreciate or judge of the beauty of my poem."

Nimai defeats him.

Nimai, however, shewed no want of patience, nor displayed any sign of being disturbed by the remark. He praised the poetry but gently pointed out that there were some serious errors of Rhetoric in it. In the first line he had used the word ভবানী-ভর্ত্তৃ signifying Siva while the word really meant Lord of the wife of Siva. This fallacy was called বিরুদ্ধ-মতি. In the word বিভবতি in the next line there was the fallacy of ক্রমভঙ্গ, in the word শ্রীলক্ষ্মীঃ the fallacy of পুনরুক্ত-বদাভাস. Thus he pointed out fallacies too numerous to be mentioned and as he went on, the natural brilliance of his speech and the light that emanated from his eyes shewed that he was endowed with special gifts of genius. The veteran scholar was dumb-struck and retired with a broken heart. Thus the glory of Navadvipa was saved. All felt that day that young Nimai was an extraordinary man, and the reputation of his *Tol* spread far and wide.

But he always scoffed at religion. Old saint-like men, who delighted in him for his wonderful gifts and could not help loving him for his pleasing disposition, were pained to find that he was a godless young man, sceptical in his views and conduct. Isvara Puri, a learned saint,—a very old and highly esteemed man of Kumar Hatta,—frequently called on him and advised him on religious matters, explaining and illustrating how faith could be obtained—faith that cleanses the soul and lifts man to the rank of the gods. He quoted chapter and verse from various works to prove what he argued. But Nimai would suddenly interrupt him, finding a grammatical flaw in his quotations and stop him by some such remarks as "Surely, sir, the verb that you use is not of the Atmanepadi class!" The saint was much saddened by the failure of his attempts to reform the young sceptic. But the eccentricities of Nimai had a limit when he grew into manhood; he stoically avoided any contact with women.

Outwardly scoffer of religion.

Though he outwardly feigned scepticism, a deep religious faith was in fact ingrained in his nature. Sridhara and Gadadhara, two respectable Brahmins, were known for the piety of their characters. He ridiculed them frequently, but if a single day passed without his meeting them, his whole soul yearned for their company, and he felt that to him the oft-ridiculed Isvara Puri was as a god. His mind was as clear as the autumnal sky, and his temperament like the tender sweet-scented *Sephalika* flower that diffuses its fragrance in the morning air. It silently attracted all who came in contact with him by its inherent love; his ardent nature, which would not brook any restraint and seemed so often to run wild, had in it a secret spring of magnetism which fascinated, even while it startled. It flowed like a noble fountain pleasing all by its playfulness,—a little dashing and abrupt in its course, yet nevertheless lovely and joyous, it indicated the presence of elements in his character which were destined to leap over the walls of orthodoxy and

The inward faith

and an ardent nature.

carry the world with him, by the innate force of pure and lofty natural instincts.

Father's death. Marriage.

In the meantime Jagannath Misra had died and Nimai had married. His wife was Laksmi Devi who had herself elected Nimai as her lord expressing a wish to her mother to marry the young scholar.

Nimai was now settled in life. His homestead consisted of five large and beautiful houses on the banks of the Ganges. He lived a simple life devoted to his studies. The death of his father weighed on him and he contemplated a journey with a view to restoring his peace of mind. He accordingly visited Eastern Bengal making a tour through the several centres of Sanskrit learning that then existed in that part of the province. His commentaries on grammar were taught in the *Tols* there and his name was widely known. He met with a cordial reception everywhere, and is said to have stayed at Kotalipara in the district of Faridpur for some time. Having received honours and rewards from his admirers, he set out again for Navadvipa after a few months. Returning home, he caught sight of Navadvipa in the distance, girdled by the Ganges, with its temples rising above the tops of the green trees. The place had a peculiar attraction for him, and he hastened to meet his mother and wife. His friends Sridhara and Gadadhara met him half way, with open arms, and in his height of joy he mimicked the accents of the East Bengal people and the ring of his merry laughter resounded once more through the air as he came near his home. His companions left him and he went home in haste and threw himself at the feet of his mother, who began to weep as she saw her dear son come back.

Tour in Eastern Bengal.

Return.

Her tears were inexplicable to him, for he had expected glad looks and blessings from his mother on his return home. He, soon, however, discovered with sorrow that his wife Laksmi Devi had died of

The death of his wife.

snake-bite. The merry and joyous young scholar collected himself in a moment and betraying no outward signs of grief, sweetly discoursed on the inevitableness of the course of nature, and tried to console his mother. A month or two passed, but the poor woman was always sorrowful; she insisted on his marrying again and Nimai to please his mother married Visnupriya, daughter of Sanatan, a famous scholar of Nadia.

Takes a second wife.

He was only twenty-one at the time. His mother seemed to be once more happy, but there came a change over the spirit of her son. A deep feeling seemed to weigh upon his soul and his mirth was gone; he shewed signs of a deeper nature growing in him. He asked his mother's permission to go to Gaya to offer *Pinda* or offerings of food and water at the feet of Visnu there, by which the spirit of a deceased person is freed from sins and his passage to heaven is insured. When Nimai wanted permission to go to Gaya to offer *Pinda* for the spirit of his father, Sachi Devi could not withhold it though she longed to keep her son at her side, ministering to her own comfort, old and feeble as she now was.

A deeper nature growing in him.

Nimai started for Gaya: his companions were gay, but he was sad. An emotion passed over him which brought tears to his eyes and he yearned for better company. Near Kumar Hatta he halted, and wanted to have a sight of Isvara Puri, the saint whom he had so often ridiculed. As he came to Kumar Hatta, he said, "It is heaven to me—this native land of Isvara Puri." The saint was dining when Nimai arrived at his place. He partook of the food which the veteran Vaisnava was taking and wept for joy; he said, "Dearer than my own soul,—than anything that I possess, than my life itself, you are to me, O venerable sir, for you are a true servant of God." As he said this, tears began to flow from both his eyes, and he clasped the feet of Isvara Puri. The old man appeared as a god to him

Starts for Gaya.

Meets Isvara Puri.

and he said again and again, "Blessed am I that I have seen such a holy man." Indeed Isvara Puri's devotion to God was such that he was admittedly the head of the Vaisnava community at that time.

Nimai set out for Gaya; his life, his conversation and ways became altogether changed. He would speak but few words, and left Kumar Hatta as in a trance. While leaving, he took a handful of dust from the place and tied it in a corner of his cloth and said, "This is the dust of the place where Isvara Puri was born. It is sacred,—it is dearer to me than all that I have, nay than life itself." He stood there absorbed in a reverie and seemed to see nothing around.

Indeed a higher life was calling him. The portals of heaven seemed to open before him. His companions thought that there was something wrong with his head; they tried to divert his mind to worldly matters by merry conversation; for a time he joined them and was even jovial and gay.

Arrives at Gaya.

They came to Gaya, and the great temple came in view with its crowd of pilgrims that flocked and pressed one another. At the sight of the temple he again grew pensive. This was the temple of Visnu, the great God of the Hindu Trinity. Visnu, while conquering the demon Gayasura, had placed his feet on the demon's head and this foot-print was changed to stone. Nimai stood with offerings before the lotus feet, 'পাদপদ্ম' as they were called. The *Pandas* sang in Sanskrit—"These feet, O Pilgrims, lead to heaven,—take ye refuge in them! These feet were adored by Bali, the King who went into the nether worlds; from these feet flows the sacred stream of the Ganges. The great *yogis* in thier mystic vision desire to catch a glimpse of these feet; their glory is sung by the God Siva and rendered into divine music by the sage Narada. They lead to Heaven, these feet of God!—there is no other way for man's salvation." Nimai appeared to be listening, but in fact he heard nothing of the song. He added the tribute of tears to those of constant shower

The feet of Visnu.

of flowers that were offered at the lotus-feet by the pilgrims, and fell straightway into a trance. His companions attended him carefully and he was soon restored to consciousness. When he came back to his senses, tears were still flowing down his cheeks and he wept and said, "Leave me, my friends, leave me, I am no longer fit for the world. Let me go to the Vrinda groves to find out Krisna, my Lord and the Lord of the Universe."

Falls into a trance.

Nimai was brought home by his companions more or less unconscious. "Where, O, where is my God?" he cried with tears flowing night and day. When he came home they found him a changed man. "I have seen a wonderful spectacle at Gaya; and I shall relate it to you,"—he said to Gadadhara and Sridhara. But while attempting to tell of it, his voice became chocked with emotion and he fell senseless into the arms of his friends. It was of the God-vision that he wanted to speak, but he could not, being overpowered by his feelings.

The God-vision.

Poor Sachi Devi, what was she to do with a son in such a condition! Physicians were called in, but Nimai told them that he had no malady to be cured by medicines. The Highest had appeared to him and he could think of nothing else. Strange it was, he said, that living in His kingdom they did not feel His presence and His great love, and again tears fell from his eyes and overpowered him.

The pupils of his *Tol* flocked round their beloved teacher, but he told them that he could not teach them anything of earth. He spoke of God's love and wept. His mother Sachi Devi sent Visnupriya the youthful wife, to him, thinking that a sight of her would divert his mind, but Nimai did not even look at her. "Where is my Lord, My Krisna!"—he cried, and read verses from sacred books and wept.

But this overflow of feeling was not all;—he went to the bank of the Ganges; the scene of his juvenile freaks now witnessed acts which shewed him to be

Serves people.

completely changed. He would carry the burdens of old and sickly people for them, sometimes he would wash the clothes of others and perform acts of menial service, which as a Brahmin he should not have done; and if people objected to being served by him, he would say, "Forbear, friends! Do not, I beg of you, prevent me! While I serve you, I see God. These little acts are holy to me."

The effect of his faith and preachings.

Sometimes he would chant the name of God for hours together, and as he sang, his eyes would become full of tears. The whole day long he would recite and sing the name of Krisna in profound devotion, till the people of Navadvipa could no longer resist his influence. When he spoke of God and his relation to man, they thronged in thousands to hear him. He preached, for instance, of love. "What," he said, "is love? Is it that attraction by which man and woman are drawn to one another? I say it is not so. Only when in your eyes man and woman appear the same and sex loses all its charms, only then can true love come"—and again, "Be like a tree. The tree gives shade even to him who cuts its boughs. It asks no water of any one, though it be withering away for want of it. Rain and storm and the burning rays of the sun it suffers, but gives sweet-scented flowers and delicious fruits to others. Patiently serve others even as a tree and let this be your motto." The words that fell from his lips appeared inspired; they went to the hearts of the men and women who thronged to hear him. But he invariably finished speaking, chanting the name of Krisna,—the music of which with its deep pathos made all weep for the love of God. Multitudes were attracted from all quarters; for the news spread on all hands that a God-man had come into their midst. By this time the sage Nityananda, who was then a young man, had come and joined Nimai. They became the centre of a circle of men who lived holy lives, did acts of charity, and recited and chanted the name of God, night and day, till songs of great poetic beauty were composed. Their music consisted of songs accom-

panied by the *Khol*, *Karatal* and *Ramsinga*, and for whole nights the music would go on, with Nimai in the centre of the party, sometimes in a state of unconsciousness, and at others, singing enthusiastically with the rest, while his face beamed with a strange God-vision.

The Bhattacharyas, the great scholars of Navadvipa, opposed this movement. Nimai had broken the trammels of caste. He boldly declared, "Though one is a Chandal (Pariah) he is superior to all Brahmins, if he is pious and has love for God." If any one says, "Thou O Krisna art my life," he will embrace him, no matter to what caste he may belong. Nothing indeed was holy or unholy in his eyes—even as he had said in his boyhood. "If any one takes food," he said, "from the same plate with a Doma (sweeper), he becomes pre-eminently entitled by that act to obtain the favour of god. If a Muchi (cobbler) prays to God with true devotion, a hundred times do I offer salutes at his feet." * In a society where the Brahmin was held as a god, and a Doma as worse than a dog, these sayings from the lips of a Brahmin sounded strangely bold. The company of men, drawn together by his teachings and by his wonderful devotion, consisted of people from all ranks of society. They mixed freely and distinction of caste was no barrier to them. The Bhattacharyas who represented the orthodox community harassed him by all means that lay in their power. "Look at these men," they said, "we cannot sleep at night for their screamings. This uproar that they create is certainly no prayer to God." They applied to the Kazi (Muhammadan Magistrate) to issue a rule prohibiting the march of the *Sankirtana*-Party, as his procession was called, through the town. The Kazi did so. That day in the evening Nimai with his followers, who now numbered hundreds of men, made a grand procession and led it

The breaking of caste and opposition of the Bhattacharyas.

* For authorities in regard to the above quotations, see my Banga-Bhasa o-Sahitya, pp. 284-89.

to the very door of the Kazi, who though at first very much enraged at this breach of orders, yet felt a desire to see the procession. When he came down, a strange spectacle met his eyes. Hundreds of men with flags and musical instruments were chanting the name of God in chorus, and in the midst of them, like a vision of heaven, young and beautiful Nimai stood God-like,—his face beaming with superhuman light and eyes like two stars, floating in a fountain of tears. He heeded not any earthly obstruction and was evidently lifted into divine ecstasy. The Kazi said, he was delighted to see the procession.

Kazi beholds a strange sight.

Two great rogues of the Brahmin caste—Jagai and Madhai, who belonged to the Police staff of the Kazi, dead-drunk with wine and accustomed to all manner of vice, resolved to assault Nimai and Nityananda and once as the two leaders were passing along the streets, Jagai threw a brick at Nityananda who was hurt on the fore-head which bled profusely. But Nityananda sang the name of God and only said to his assailant "Strike me again if you like, but sing the name of Krisna." His face became so full of tenderness that the rogues repented, and became reformed from that hour. So great was the attraction of the personality of Nimai that sometimes for a whole night the *Sankirtana* party sang round him without minding the passing of the night and when it came to an end, they would wonderingly look at the sun thinking that he had appeared too soon.

Jagai and Madhai.

But Nimai felt that there was a strong party in Navadvipa who were not slow to calumniate him everywhere. He thought that as a householder, his teachings might not commend themselves to all classes and therefore determined to renounce the world, turn a *Sanyasin* and preach the Love of God all over India. This news came as a disaster to his followers, amongst whom were the veteran scholar Murari Gupta, the young and gifted Gadadhara Das, the poet Narahari Das of Srikhanda, the singer and poet Vasu Ghosh

Nimai resolves to turn a *Sanyasin*

with Nityananda and the venerable Advaitacharya of Santipur at their head.

and becomes one.

But the word had passed his lips, and all who knew his character felt that he was inexorable. He left Navadvipa in the month of March in 1509 A.D. and passed through the usual ceremonies required for the *Sanyasin*'s vow. The *Guru* or the religious preceptor elected by him for the occasion was Bharati of Katwa. Nimai thus cut off all the ties of world, threw away his sacred thread and shaved his head. He was given the name of Krisna Chaitanya as a *Sanyasin* and has ever since been called Chaitanya or Chaitanya Deva.

To Orissa.

He went to Orissa, where he met Vasu Deva Sarvabhauma, the greatest Indian scholar of the period. Vasu Deva was already advanced in years. He took Chaitanya to task for turning a *Sanyasin* when only a young man, as he had no right to do. Chaitanya said in reply, "O my venerable sir, do not call me by such a high epithet as that of a *Sanyasin*. The love of God has driven me mad and I have thrown away my sacred thread and shaved my head for this. Bless me, sir, that my mind may be ever devoted to him." Vasu Deva was explaining the Gita, but Chaitanya interpreted it in a new light. The veteran scholar was struck by the new ideas, by the flow of sentiment and by the remarkable intellect of the young *Sanyasin*. When after three continuous nights Chaitanya had finished his exposition, Vasu Deva felt that he was in the presence of a superhuman man, endowed with poetical and spiritual gift, the like of which he had never before seen. From that time he became a humble disciple of Chaitanya Deva. Pratap Rudra, the King of Orissa, who was dreaded by the Pathans and was known as a powerful prince of India at the time, became his next disciple, and his prime minister Rama Ray, deeply versed in Sanskrit lore and an eminent poet, avowed his faith in Chaitanya Deva and was so much devoted to him that he constantly sought the company of the great master in subsequent times.

Travels over Southern India.

From Orissa with the blacksmith Govinda as his single companion, though hundreds had wanted to follow him, the young *Sanyasin* started for and travelled over the whole of Southern India.

His tour.

He left Navadvipa in 1509; from there he came to Katwa in Burdwan. He crossed the Damodar and stayed in the house of one Kasi Misra for a day; from there he went to Hazipur and thence to Midnapur where Kesava Samanta, a rich man, scolded him for taking the vow of a *Sanyasin* when he was so young; from Midnapur he went to Narayangar and thence to Vatesvaram; he crossed the Suvarna Rekha and reached Hariharpur and next moved to Nilgar; crossing the Vaitarani he visited the temples of Gopinath, Saksi-gopal and Nimraja on the banks of the Mahanadi; he next came to Atharanala whence he saw the flag of the Jagannath temple and was lifted into an ecstasy. He stayed at Puri for three months.

In April (7th Vaisak), 1510, he started again with his one follower Govinda for Southern India. He came to the Godavari and met Rama Ray; thence he proceeded to Trimanda (modern Trimalgarh in Hyderabad) and converted Dhundi Rama Tirtha to his faith; from Trimanda he came to Siddhavatesvara (modern Sidhavatesvaram; between Cudappa and the river Punna) where a rich young man named Tirtharam came to tempt him in a vulgar manner, and himself became a convert to his faith. He then crossed a forest extending over twenty miles called Munna (on the river Munna in the Madras Presidency); from Munna he moved to Venkata (a city near Tripadi in the Madras Presidency); he next visited a forest known as the 'Vagula woods' and converted Pantha Bhil, a notorious robber; there he passed three days and nights without food chanting the name of God. Thence he moved to Girisvara and to Tripadi Nagara (about forty miles to the North-west of Madras); he next visited the temple of Panna Narasinha, and arrived at Visnu Kanchi (modern Conjeeveram). From there he visited two shrines, Kalatirtha and

Sandhitirtha; then he passed on to Chaipalli (modern Trichinopoly); he next went to Nagar (about 145 miles to the east of Trichinopoly and situated on the sea-coast). From Nagar he went to Tanjore (about 14 miles to the south of Nagar); he crossed the mount Chandhalu there and passed on to Padmakota (about 25 miles to the south of Tanjore) and thence to Tripatra (about twenty-five miles to the south); there he crossed a forest extending over 300 miles in 15 days; he next came to Ranga Dhama (Sri Rangam) and visited the temple of Nrisinha; from there he went to Ramanath and thence to Rameśvar; he next travelled through a forest called Madhikavana and crossing the river Tamraparni reached Kanya Kumari on the sea-coast; from there he proceeded to Trivankoo (modern Travancore). This place is described as being surrounded by hills. The King Rudrapati who reigned there at the time received Chaitanya Deva cordially; from Travancore he proceeded to Poyasni (modern Panani) and thence to Matsatirtha and Kachar, crossed the rivers Bhadra and Naga-Panchapadi and came to Chitole (modern Chitaldrug), (on the northern boundary of Mysore); from Chital to Chandipur and thence to Gurjari (near Hyderabad) and thence to Purna (modern Poona); from Purna he moved to Pattana and thence to Jajuri. Here he preached God's love to the unfortunate women—the Muraries. From Jajuri he went to the woods called Choranandivan where he met a famous bandit named Naroji who became a convert and followed him. He crossed the river Mula and reached Nasik; thence to Trimvak and Daman; he crossed the Tapti and reached Varoch (modern Broach); from Varoch he came to Varada where Naroji died; He visited Ahmedabad and crossed the river Subhramati; he met two of his Bengali countrymen Govinda Charan and Ramananda, from Kulinagram; he went to Ghoga where a prostitute named Varamukhi, beautiful and wealthy, became a convert, cut off her hair and took the vow of a nun. He next visited Somnath in November, 1510, reached Dvaraka from where he marched to Dohadanagar and thence to Amjhora, Kooksi, Mandura.

Deoghar. Thence he proceeded to Chandipur, from where he went to Roypur, Vidyanagar and Ratnapur; from the last place he crossed the Mahanadi and reached Svarnagar, thence to Sambalpur, Daspal and to Allalnath; he reached Puri on 3rd of Magh (January, 1511). Thus his travelling on foot from Puri back took one year eight months and twenty-six days, and he travelled nearly 4,000 miles within this time. During his travels he spent many days without any food. Whatever alms were brought to him by Govinda he would partake of only in very small quantities. Like a mad man his body lay covered with dust; he chanted the name of Krisna with tears in his eyes as he moved from place to place. Some of the scholars at Tungabhadra, Chandipur and at other places challenged him to discussion on religious topics. He would not, however, enter into any controversy with them. He said that he was an illiterate man. He was ready to write out 'letters of victory' in favour of his assailants. But when he was dragged into a discussion, in spite of himself, he would deal wonderfully with the questions at issue, and none was a match for him. He concluded his discussion always with that display of emotion and trust in God which gave him the look of a heavenly being;—his eyes swam with tears, as he sang the name of Krisna in deep musical tones, which sounded, say those who heard him, like temple bells. Here is a description given of him by his servant Govinda* :—

Comes back to Puri in February, 1511.

His work in Southern India.

"His influence over people was wonderful, he could move them as he liked by his preachings. Sometimes he would speak in the Tamil language (which he had acquired during his travels), at others in pure Sanskrit."

* আশ্চর্য্য প্রভাব বুঝি কভু দেখি নাই।
কখন তামিল বুলি বলে গোরা রায়।
কখন সংস্কৃত বলি শ্রোতারে বুঝায়।

Karcha by Govinda Das.

At Gurjari after explaining to the people their duty to men and their relation to God*,

"He cried aloud, 'O God! O my Krisna'! and the place seemed to turn into heaven, a pleasant breeze blew and the villagers came in groups till a crowd was formed. The fragrance of the lotus emanated from his person and charmed every one. Chaitanya lost consciousness of the world and chanted 'O Krisna, O my God.' All eyes were fixed on him and his eyes shed incessant tears. Maharattas of noble families came there and stood statue like hearing him recite the name of God. Behind them I saw hundreds of women with the end of their *Sari* wiping away the falling tears, moved as they were by the pathos of Chaitanya thus calling upon God. Innumerable *Sanyasins* of the Saiva and Sakta sects stood there with folded hands and listened to the chanting with closed eyes."

* এত বলি কৃষ্ণ হে বলিয়া ডাক দিল।
সে স্থান অমনই যেন বৈকুণ্ঠ হইল॥
অনুকূল বায়ু তবে বহিতে লাগিল।
দলে দলে গ্রাম্য লোক আসি দেখা দিল॥
ছুটিল পদ্মের গন্ধ বিমোহিত করি।
অজ্ঞান হইয়া নাম করে গৌর হরি॥
প্রভুর মুখের পানে সবার নয়ন।
ঝর ঝর করি অশ্রু পড়ে অনুক্ষণ॥
বড় বড় মহারাষ্ট্রী আসি দলে দলে।
শুনিতে লাগিল নাম মিলিয়া সকলে॥
পশ্চাৎভাগেতে মুই দেখি তাকাইয়া।
শত শত কুলবধূ আছে দাঁড়াইয়া॥
নারীগণ অশ্রুজল মুছিছে আঁচলে।
ভক্তি ভরে হরি নাম শুনিছে সকলে॥
অসংখ্য বৈষ্ণব শৈব সন্ন্যাসী জুটিয়া।
হরিনাম শুনিতেছে নয়ন মুদিয়া॥

Karcha.

Chaitanya came back to Puri in 1511. Thence he went to Vrindavan and spent there the following six years, after which he returned to Puri and stayed for 18 years. His earthly career came to an end on the afternoon of a Sunday, being the 7th day of the waxing moon in the month of Asarh (July) on Sunday at about 3 P.M. (1534 A.D.), He was 48 years and 4 months old at the time.

The end in 1534.

His wonderful emotion and tenderness display, however, only one phase of his character. He was an ascetic of the truest type, and was always keenly alive to the holiness of the ascetic's vow. If any one amongst his companions showed the least worldliness, he was unsparing in his treatment of him. He used to sleep on the bare floor of the Puri temple and when Jagadananda once brought a pillow for him, he indignantly said "Bring me a couch, Jagadananda, if you desire me to taste the comforts of this world. Don't you know that I am an ascetic, that as such I ought to sleep on the bare earth and luxury is inconsistent with my vows." One of his followers Chota Hari Das accosted a beautiful woman named Madhabi in a tender manner. Chaitanya Deva said "He has taken the ascetic's vow and still follows after women. I will not look at him again." He never again allowed Chota Hari Das to come into his presence and the man is said to have died of a broken heart. Sanatan, a rich man who became his disciple came to meet him wearing a blanket which he had purchased for Rs. 3. It was the cold season and the bare body of Chaitanya Deva and those of his followers were exposed to the shivering cold but they looked contented and joyful in spite of it. Chaitanya Deva talked with Sanatan but kept his eyes fixed on his blanket. The look was too much for Sanatan who escaped it by giving the blanket to a beggar and then joined the order of the ascetics. Govinda Das offered half his portion of *haritaki* to Chaitanya Deva after his dinner, and kept the other half for the next day. On seeing the other half, the next day he enquired of Govinda Das where he got it. The latter replied that it was the remnant

His asceticism and severity.

of the day before. "Would you store up things for the morrow like a worldly man? You cannot then be admitted into the order of the ascetics." He was made to retire to his home for this act. A bottle of perfumes was presented by an admirer in Puri. It was broken on the spot by his order and the perfume allowed to soak into earth. The ascetics were required to clean a temple one day at Puri. It was observed that the dust carried away by Chaitanya Deva was larger than that by the servants employed at the same task.

The fine frenzy of a poet and a lover.

There is yet another side of his character which requires prominent notice and which inspired the Vaisnava poets with new ideals in their love-poems. The vision of God was always before him. It was Krisna's lovely complexion that he found painted in the newly formed clouds—and it was Krisna's divine flute that he heard in the songs of birds. When conversing with learned scholars and the devotees of the type of Ram Ray, he would explain the meaning of this love; this was a concrete way of thinking of the universal spirit—the great soul attracting the lesser souls as the sun attracts the planets. Even in the Vedas we find a Risi praying to God that He may come to him as a husband comes to his wife. This idea was taken up and developed in the faith of the Vaisnavas. God, according to them, is the Lord of love. This Chaitanya explained with many learned quotations from Sanskrit works on theology. But when the God-vision possessed him, he yielded to the fine frenzy of a poet and a lover. Whenever he would see the *Kadamba* flower blooming into beauty freshened by the rains, he would fall into a trance, remembering that it was the favourite of Krisna; when the clouds appeared on the clear horizon, with the crown of the rain-bow fixed above, his eyes would not move from the lovely sight and he shed profuse tears, stretching out his arms heavenwards and calling on his beloved Krisna to come to him. Wherever he saw a shady grove of flowering trees, he took it for the Vrinda groves where Krisna sported and wherever he saw

a river flow before him, he heard in it the soft murmurs of the river Yamuna, associated with Krisna. It was a beautiful sight to see him in fits of ecstasy. The *Tamal* tree with its dark-blue foliage created an illusion in him and he ran to embrace it—there with tears in his eyes he would chant hymns and quote verses on love. He had the highest poetical vision vouchsafed only to those who are endowed with the power to realise the presence of that primeval Poet whose creation of fancy this world is. If a great Emperor all unexpectedly calls at the lowly cottage of his poorest subject, what tribute can be offered to the monarch except the gratitude of his whole soul expressed in tears! Even so it was the case with Chaitanya; he saw the God-vision and became completely lost in it; his life was a course of thanks-giving tears, hymns and praises offered to God.

He reorganised the Vaisnava order.

Yet this divine man never neglected the society he lived in. He allowed the Muhammadans to enter his order; he cared not for caste or creed; he reorganised society and formed a new order in which merit and not birth was the mark of superiority. In this new order, Ganga Narayan Chakravarty—a renowned Brahmin scholar, openly took the dust of the feet of Narottam—a Sudra, and acknowledged him as his spiritual preceptor and many others did similar things—violating openly all caste-prejudices.

Incarnation of God.

People took Chaitanya as an incarnation of God and his image is now worshipped by the Vaisnavas of Bengal and Orissa. He was always unsparing however during his life-time, in his condemnation of such attempfs to deify him. Ram Ray, the Prime Minister of Pratap Rudra to Orissa, asked him why he was so cautious in his conduct "We all know you to be god in human flesh, you may act as you like; why observe so many restraints ?"—he said. Chaitanya replied in firm tones, " I am a man and I have taken the ascetic's vow. In body, in mind, in speech, and in all my dealings I must be spotless. As in a white cloth a dark spot becomes conspicious, so a trifling fault in an ascetic's character is prominent in the eyes

of men. He is shunned like the pitcher of milk with a drop of wine in it." Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, the veteran scholar, with folded palms bowed down to him on his return from Southern India, and said, "I know you, O Lord, to be God on earth" Chaitanya indignantly answered, "Sir, why do you talk nonsense? Speak on other subjects." So in Chandipur when Isvara Bharati prayed to him as to a god, he was offended. In the historic garden of Srivasa's house at Navadvipa, the party assembled, instead of singing and reciting the name of God, one day sang, "Praises to you, O Chaitanya!"—and when Chaitanya heard it, he stopped the singing, and asked the party to retire for the night. Such instances are numerous in his several biographies.

But when in one of his trances he would lose all consciousness of the outer world and picture-like or like a figure sculptured in fine clay, would lean on the shoulders of a comrade, his eyes overflowing with unconscious tears—wide-open, yet not cognizant of this phenomenal world—a celestial joy beaming out of his countenance that spoke of the soul enjoying divine communion within, he was sometimes heard to murmur, "I am He." The mystic words were caught by his followers who based their faith on them. But when reminded of this, on return of his consciousness, he denied all knowledge of such 'unholy' utterance, cried for forgiveness in remorse and said that he was a great sinner. The fact of this utterance coming from his lips during occasional fits of unconsciousness is related in Chaitanya-Bhagavata and other works which were written many years after Chaitanya Deva had passed away, and we all know how fertile is the Indian soil for the growth of wild stories about saintly characters whom, it is to the advantage of their followers to deify. In the contemporary records left by Govinda Das, whom we consider to be one of the most authentic biographers of Chaitanya, no reference is made to any such utterances, though he describes Chaitanya Deva's ecstasies, more often than any other biographer. It is for such omissions and for the rational view of matters which he took, that orthodox Vaisnavas do not give credence to Govinda

Karmakar's accounts, whereas for these very reasons his work has an historical value and deserves the highest esteem.

The greatest exponent of the Renaissance.

But whether an incarnation or not,—whether he did or did not cure leprosy and blindness ascribed to him by the later biographers, we verily believe that he was a god-man, vouchsafed to Bengal, in order to raise her out of the stupor of ignorance into which she had sunk for ages. He embodied in himself the perfection of that spirit of faith and love which this country aspired to reach, rising out of the extremely sceptical opinions of latter-day Buddhism. In him we find the faith that belongs to the age of the Puranic Renaissance in fully developed form and in this respect he may be said to have been its greatest exponent. But he was far removed from the all-pervading spirit of Puranic Renaissance in disowning the Brahmin as the unquestionable head of society, electing in his place those endowed with spirituality and high character as naturally fit to rule, irrespective of their birth.

III. Vaisnava Biographies

Before the advent of Chaitanya Deva, there had been no biographical literature in Bengal. The songs in praise of the Pala kings are monstrous fables and are as remote from history as any fiction; the facts gleaned from them are the result of the scrutinizing researches of scholars, by which fables are interpreted in the light of history. During the Puranic Revival, following the Buddhistic period, people liked to hear stories related about their gods, and about the mythological characters of pre-historic times as narrated in the Puranas. The scholars were inspired by the ideals set up in classical works and altogether lost light of the living men and women of the human world. But Chaitanya Deva's holy life and his pure devotion threw Sastras and theological works into the background; the Puranas came to occupy only a secondary place with his followers, and living examples of faith

Caste ignored in Vaisnava biographies.

came to the fore-front. The Brahmins with Manu's jurisprudence, Yajnavalkya's laws and the caste-stories created by the Brahmavaivarta Purana, lost their authority with the Vaisnavas, and in the new order Sudras, the lowest of the four original castes, often occupied equal rank with Brahmins. The Vaisnavas of Bengal like the Buddhist Sramanas were held in as much respect as the Brahmins, though they were recruited like the Sramanas from all castes. The social order was completely upset; the followers of Chaitanya Deva often showed a fanatical disregard for caste-prejudices. A person in Hindu society cannot, according to rule, partake of cooked food at the hands of one who belongs to an inferior caste. In Chaitanya-Charitamrita, we find one of Chaitanya's disciples named Kali Das who belonged to one of the highest castes in society, making it the mission of his life to partake of refuse food left on the plates of Pariahs, Domas, and Chandals, and it is written that when Chaitanya Deva heard of this he was pleased. At a time when caste-rules held people in their iron grip, such fanaticism was necessary, in order to open the eyes of men to the truth.

Syamananda, Narottam Das and Raghunath Das were held in the highest esteem by the Vaisnava community; nay, many good Brahmins acknowledged them as their spiritual heads, though they belonged to inferior castes.

Narahari Chakravarti, a Brahmin author, wrote a life of Narottam, a Sudra, with feelings verging on worship. Such a thing had been inconceivable with the orthodox community of the period and yet became too true, shewing that a new life had dawned in this land awakening men to a right appreciation of the value of character and spirituality in preference to caste-honour. Narahari, the Brahmin, often declared himself eager to take the dust of the feet of Narottam, a Sudra.

The biographical literature of the Vaisnavas is as varied as it is rich, and it gives us a graphic account of the history of Bengal society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

(a) *Karcha or Notes by Govinda Das*

Let us first begin with the biography of Chaitanya Deva by his servant Govinda Karmakar, who accompanied him during his travels in the Deccan. It is not a biography, properly so called, the book is called *Karcha* or notes. He says,—" I got down notes of his doings very privately."*—privately, because Chaitanya Deva would not like that his companions should take notes of the incidents of his life. He would not tolerate any act in his immediate followers, from worldly considerations and much less any for the glorification of his own personality.

Govinda quarrels with his wife and leaves home.

Govinda Das was a blacksmith by caste. " I used," he writes, "to make weapons, ladles and tongs; my mother's name is Madhavi; my wife Sasimukhi quarrelled with me and called me an illiterate fool. Feeling greatly insulted, I left home one morning." †

Meets Chaitanya.

It was in the year 1508 that Govinda Das, indignant at his wife's conduct, left Kanchannagar,—his native village in Burdwan. He heard on the way that a great saint had appeared in Navadvipa and conceived a strong desire to see him; he came to Navadvipa at noon time, and met Chaitanya Deva in the company of his friends, bathing in the Ganges. The sight charmed him. He writes :‡—

" With him there was an ascetic (Nityananda) whose face seemed to be lit up with true spiritual fire. Next there came

* "কড়চা করিয়া রাখি অতি সংগোপনে ॥" Karcha.

† "অস্ত্র হাতা বেড়ি গড়ি জাতিতে কামার।
মাধবী নামেতে হয় জননী আমার ॥
আমার নারীর নাম শশীমুখী হয়।
একদিন ঝগড়া করি মোরে কটু কয় ॥
নির্গুণ মুরুখ বলি গালি দিল মোরে।
সেই অপমানে গৃহ ছাড়িলাম ভোরে ॥" Karcha.

‡ "সঙ্গে এক অবধূত প্রসন্ন বদন ॥
অবশেষে আইল তথি অদ্বৈত গোঁসাই।
এমন তেজস্বী দুই কভু দেখি নাই ॥

Advaita Gosvami; never have I seen a face so full of wisdom; his beard and hair were hoary with age, giving him a venerable look; his flowing beard fell below his breast. * * * I looked at the Lord (Chaitanya). The very sight was wonderful to me. I cannot describe the feelings that came upon me. A thrill of joy passed through me; and my hair stood on end for joy like the spikes of the Kadamba flower. I stood lost in wonder and delight. I was spell-bound and transfixed to the spot; my limb trembled and I perspired till my garments were wet. What I felt I cannot exactly describe—I wished I could wash the dear feet of the Lord with my tears."[1]

He prayed to Chaitanya to be admitted as a servant in his household, which permission was at once accorded. Govinda Das describes his new home and its immates thus:[2]—

Govinda Das's new home.

"There are five large and beautiful houses standing on the banks of the Ganges. Sachi Devi (mother of Chaitanya, is short in stature and of quiet and unassuming appearance. She is always making enquiries about her son. Visnupriya Devi is the wife of our Lord, and is always busy in ministering to his comforts.

[1] পক্ক কেশ পক্ক দাড়ি বড় মোহনিয়া।
দাড়ি পড়িয়াছে তার হৃদয় ছাড়িয়া॥
ঘাটে বসি এই লীলা হেরিনু নয়নে।
কি জানি কেমন ভাব উপজিল মনে॥
কদম্ব কুসুম সম অঙ্গে কাঁটা দিল।
থর হরি সব অঙ্গ কাঁপিতে লাগিল॥
ঘামিয়া উঠিল দেহ তিতিল বসন।
ইচ্ছা অশ্রু জলে মুই পাখালি চরণ॥"

Karcha.

[2] "গঙ্গার উপরে বাড়ি অতি মনোহর।
পাঁচ খানি বড় ঘর দেখিতে সুন্দর॥
শান্ত মূর্ত্তি শচী দেবী অতি খর্ব্ব কায়।
নিমাই নিমাই বলি সদা কুকরায়॥

Humble in spirit, of a shy and retiring nature, she speaks very gently."

No meat, no fish could enter their home, as indeed is the case in all true Vaisnava families. All food prepared in the house was first offered to Krisna, and then the inmates of the house partook of it as *prasad*. Various kinds of vegetables and preparations of milk were used in Chaitanya Deva's house, and Govinda Das relished them exceedingly. He writes* :—

He relishes the home-meal.

"There were sweet vegetable-roots, fruits, thickened milk, butter, cream and excellent preparations of herbs, vegetable soup, gruel, puddings and various sorts of sweetmeats. Sachi Devi cooks delicious food, which is first offered to Krisna and then distributed amongst the members of the household. I, the prince of gluttons, became a willing servant in the house."

Chaitanya's emotions.

But Chaitanya's mind was not on earthly matters. "His mind is lost in love for Krisna; his eyes overflow with tears." "If any one cries 'Oh Krisna, oh! my soul!' Chaitanya immediately runs to embrace him." †

* বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া দেবী হন প্রভুর ঘরণী।
প্রভুর সেবায় ব্যস্ত দিবস রজনী॥
লজ্জাবতী বিনয়িনী মৃদু মৃদু ভাষ।" Karcha.
প্রতিদিন ভোগ হয় বিষ্ণুর মন্দিরে।
কত ফল মূল ছানা ননী সর ক্ষীরে॥
শাক সূপ দধি সুক্তা মোদক পায়স।
বড়া লাড্ডু মিষ্টকাদি খাইতে সুরস॥
প্রতি দিন শচী মাতা করেন রন্ধন।
আনন্দে করেন সবে প্রসাদ ভোজন॥
পেটুকের শিরোমণি মুই হই দাস।
সদাল প্রভুর পাত্রে খাই বার মাস॥ Karcha.

† "কৃষ্ণ অনুরাগে সদা ব্যাকুল অন্তর।
শুনিলে কৃষ্ণের নাম অশ্রু ধারা বয়।

He resolves to turn an ascetic.

After Govinda Das had stayed a little more than a year in the house, Chaitanya expressed his wish to renounce the world, and become an ascetic. He thus described his mission * :—

"I shall have my head shaven, cast off the sacred thread, and wander as a Sannyasi from house to house, preaching the love of Krisna. Youngmen, children, old men, worldly men and even the Pariahs will stand round me charmed with the name of God. The very boys and girls will cry "Oh Krisna!" The infidels and the *Aghorapanthis* (a vicious class of Tantrikas) will be drawn by the charm of Krisna's name. The flag of his name will wave on high, piercing the very skies. Kings and poor men alike will feel the irresistible charm of His name. If I do not renounce my home, how can sinners be saved? My heart feels deep pangs for the sinners of the world and for those who are stung by the world's woes."

যদি প্রাণ কৃষ্ণ বলি উচ্চৈস্বরে ডাকে।
দেখে গিয়ে আলিঙ্গন করেন তাহাকে॥"

Karcha.

* "একাকার মুহি শিখা সূত্র তেয়াগিয়া।
বেড়াইব দ্বারে দ্বারে হরি নাম দিয়া॥
সেই নাম পথে ঘাটে করিব প্রচার॥
চণ্ডাল যুবক গৃহ বাল বৃদ্ধ নারী।
নামে মত্ত হইয়া দাঁড়াবে সারি সারি॥
বালকে বলিবে হরি বালিকা বলিবে।
পাষণ্ড অঘোরপন্থী নামে মত্ত হবে॥
আকাশ ভেদিয়া নামের পতাকা উড়িবে।
রাজা প্রজা এক সঙ্গে গড়াগড়ি যাবে॥
সন্ন্যাস করিয়া যদি না নই কৌপিন।
তবে কিসে উদ্ধারিব পাপী তাপী দীন॥
কলির জীবের দশা মলিন দেখিয়া।
থাকিতে পারিনা আর কাঁদে মোর হিয়া॥"

Karcha.

Govinda Das describes minutely all that happened to Chaitanya on his way from Puri to the Deccan, and thence to Gujarat and back to Puri. In Siddhvatesvaram occurred the tempting of Chaitanya, to which I referred in a previous chapter. Govinda Das describes the incident thus* :—

Tirtharam tempts him.

"There came a rich man of the name of Tirtharam, with two harlots, to try Chaitanya and see if he should prove a mere pretender. Of the two women, one was called Satyavai and the other Laksmivai. They began to speak of many things before Chaitanya. Being instructed by the rich man, they tried to tempt him in various ways and Tirtharam thought the ascetic would surely be wrecked this time. Satyavai adopted coquettish manners, and sat smiling near Chaitanya. She partially uncovered herself displaying her charms. Chaitanya addressed her saying 'Oh Mother!', Satya was frightened at this address, and Laksmi's fears were apparent on her face. Chaitanya was not in the least

* হেন কালে আইল সেথা তীর্থ ধনবান।
দুইজন বেশ্যা সঙ্গে আইলা দেখিতে।
সন্ন্যাসীর ভারি ভূরি পরীক্ষা করিতে॥
সত্যবাই লক্ষ্মীবাই নামে বেশ্যাদ্বয়।
প্রভুর নিকটে আসি কত কথা কয়॥
ধনীর শিক্ষায় সেই বেশ্যা দুইজন।
প্রভুরে বুঝিতে বহু করে আয়োজন॥
তীর্থরাম মনে মনে নানা কথা বলে।
সন্ন্যাসীর তেজ এবে হরে লব ছলে॥
কত রঙ্গ করে লক্ষ্মী সত্যবালা হাসে।
সত্যবালা হাসি মুখে বসে প্রভু পাশে॥
কাঁচলি খুলিয়া সত্য দেখাইলা স্তন।
সত্যারে করিলা প্রভু মাতৃ সম্বোধন॥
থর থরি কাঁপে সত্য প্রভুর বচনে।
ইহা দেখি লক্ষ্মী বড় ভয় পায় মনে॥

affected by their presence. Satya fell at his feet in remorse. Chaitanya said, ' Oh Mother ! Why do you make me a sinner by falling at my feet ? ' He could say no more. His matted locks hung loose—covered over with dust. The ecstasy of love passed over him and he began to tremble for joy; everything of this world seemed to pass away from his sight. He became unconscious in the presence of Satyavai and Laksmivai, and danced in the very ecstasy of love, crying out ' Oh Krisna, oh Krisna ! ' He was like one under a spell, and his eyes overflowed with tears of joy. His outer robes fell from his body, and thus uncovered he stood breathing deeply. Sometimes he fell to the ground unconscious of the hurt he received from the thorns. His rosary was unstrung. His body was reduced to a skeleton by much fasting and it bled being torn by the thorns. Charmed with the

কিছুই বিকার নাই প্রভুর মনেতে।
ধেয়ে গিয়ে সত্যবালা পড়ে চরণেতে॥
কেন অপরাধী কর আমারে জননী।
এই মাত্র বলি প্রভু পড়িলা ধরণী॥
খসিল জটার ভার ধূলায় ধূসর।
অনুরাগে থর থর কাঁপে কলেবর॥
সব এলো থেলো হ'ল প্রভুর আমার।
কোথা লক্ষ্মী কোথা সত্য নাহি দেখি আর॥
নাচিতে লাগিলা প্রভু বলি হরি হরি।
লোমাঞ্চিত কলেবর অশ্রু ঝর ঝরি॥
গিয়াছে কৌপীন খসি কোথা বহির্বাস।
উলঙ্গ হইয়া নাচে ঘন বহে শ্বাস॥
আছাড়িয়া পড়ে নাহি মানে কাঁটা খোঁচা।
ছিঁড়ে গেল কণ্ঠ হতে মালিকার গোছা॥
না খাইয়া অস্থি চর্ম্ম হইয়াছে সার।
ক্ষীন অঙ্গে বহিতেছে শোণিতের ধার॥
হরি নামে মত্ত হয়ে নাচে গোরা রায়।
অঙ্গ হইতে অদ্ভুত তেজ বাহিরায়॥

name of Krisna, he danced in ecstasy of heavenly joy. A strange light shot forth from his person. The rich man was lost in admiration at this sight. He fell at his feet. But Chaitanya was unconscious. With arms lifted towards heaven he danced on. He took Satyavai by the arm and told her to call on the name of Krisna. All were charmed at the sight. He lay unconscious of the physical world, his mind fixed on Krisna,—his head drooped on one side, and saliva flowed from his lips—his body was covered with dust— eyes were shut yet still shedding tears. The Buddhists who were on the spot, deeply moved by the sight, cried 'Oh Krisna, oh Krisna!' and as Chaitanya heard the name of God from the mouth of these sceptics, tears—incessant tears—streamed forth from his eyes. Tirtharam was deeply affected at the sight. He said, 'Oh! sinner and faithless man that I am, be gracious. Oh Lord! show me how I may

ইহা দেখি সেই ধনী মনে চমকিল।
চরণ তলেতে পড়ি আশ্রয় লইল॥
চরণে দলেন তারে নাহি বাহ্যজ্ঞান।
হরি বলি বাহু তুলে নাচে আগুয়ান॥
সত্যেরে বাহুতে ধরি বলে বল হরি।
হরি বল প্রাণেশ্বর মুকুন্দ মুরারী॥
কোথা প্রভু কোথায় বা মুকুন্দ মুরারী।
অজ্ঞান হইলা সবে এই ভাব হেরি॥
হরি নামে মত্ত প্রভু নাহি বাহ্য জ্ঞান।
ঘাড় ভাঙ্গি পড়িয়েছে আকুল পরাণ॥
মুখে লালা অঙ্গে ধূলা নাহিক বসন।
কণ্টকিত কলেবর মুদিত নয়ন॥
ভাব দেখি যত বৌদ্ধ বলে হরি হরি।
শুনিয়া গোরার চক্ষে বহে অশ্রু বারি॥
ইহা দেখি তীর্থরাম কাঁদিয়া উঠিল।
বড়ই পাষণ্ড মুই বলে তীর্থরাম।
কৃপা করি দেহ মোরে প্রভু হরি নাম॥

obtain God's mercy!' Chaitanya embraced Tirtharam and said, 'You are really a virtuous soul, Oh Tirtharam! I feel myself hallowed by your touch.' And again and again he said, 'Tirtharam, you have won the love of God.' Tirtharam fell at his feet and wept. When remorse came to him, and with that a spirit of resignation, Chaitanya embraced him and raised him by his arms. He said, "Cast away all earthly wealth like a straw, and then only you will have true love for God. Cast off your fine apparel and jewels;—by renouncing these transitory riches you will secure permanent riches. This body of yours, covered with skin, will rot and perish in a few years; and when your soul has departed, it will be reduced to ashes or eaten by worms or turned into clods of earth. There is nothing in the world, my friend, in which to glory save only devotion to God. Know all earthly things to be fleeting; renounce them and correct yourself of your habits of luxury. I cannot say how God's grace can be obtained. God Himself carries His grace to the soul of

তীর্থরাম পাষণ্ডেরে করি আলিঙ্গন।
প্রভু বলে তীর্থরাম তুমি সাধুজন॥
পবিত্র হইনু আমি পরশি তোমারে।
তুমিত প্রধান ভক্ত কহে বারে বারে॥
তীর্থরাম ধনী তবে চরণে পড়িয়া।
আকুল হইল কত কান্দিয়া কান্দিয়া॥
কান্দিতে কান্দিতে যবে ভক্তি উপজিল।
অমনি ধরিয়া হাত প্রভু আলিঙ্গিল॥
প্রভু কহে তৃণ সম গণহ বৈভবে।
ভক্তিধন অমূল্য রতন পাবে তবে॥
দেহ হতে প্রাণ পাখী উড়ে যাবে যবে।
হয় কীট নয় ভস্ম নয় মাটী হবে॥
গৌরবের ধন কিছু নাহি ত্রিভুবনে।
কেবল গৌরব আছে ঈশ্বর ভজনে॥
বিলাস বৈভব সব অনিত্য জানিয়া।
একে একে ফেলে দাও দূরেতে টানিয়া॥

man. It is not in my power to say more than this. The whole world bears unfailing testimony to divine grace. What other proof will a wise man require to bring conviction to him? Nothing is gained by fruitless discussion. To one whose soul yearns for divine love, God Himself comes, and inspires him with faith."

These and other teachings moved Tirtharam so much that he took the ascetic's vow and began to chant the name of Krisna day and night. His infidel friends came and pitied the condition of Tirtharam, and said, 'Lo! Tirtharam is ruined.'

The account of how Naroji and Bhilapantha, two great robbers, were reformed, and how Varamukhi, an exceedingly beautiful woman of Gujarat, left her evil ways by the influence of Chaitanya Deva, are vividly described by Govinda Das.

His influence irresistible.

The frenzy of divine love seen in Chaitanya Deva had attractions which could not be resisted by any feeling soul. Wherever the young ascetic went, people thronged round him in large numbers; scholars admired his profound learning, and the common people his ecstasies of love. And here in Bengal the village artists still paint him as standing in a trance, with his hands uplifted towards heaven and his eyes shedding tears.

His followers, who, inspite of their earnest entreaties to be permitted to accompany him on his tour, were all left at Puri, grieved at the separation and waited eagerly there for his return.

ঈশ্বরে বিশ্বাস ঈশ্বর আনিয়া মিলায়।
আর কিছু প্রমাণ ত কহনে না যায়॥
অসংখ্য জগৎ হয় প্রমাণের ঠাঁই।
প্রমাণ নাহিক চাহে পণ্ডিত গোসাঁই॥
নাহি প্রয়োজন বহু বাদ বিতণ্ডায়।
কৃষ্ণ আনি সাধকের বিশ্বাস মিলায়॥

Karcha.

longing for the happy meeting. Chaitanya wandered through Southern India all this time, like a mad man, reduced to a skeleton by the fatigues of the journey, by fasts and by vigils,—all borne with a gladsome heart because of his great love. Children used to throw dust at him, sometimes taking him to be a mad man as he passed by; but when he spoke, the wandering gaze of thousands fell upon him and they saw his face glow with a celestial light, which is a never-failing sign of spirituality, vouchsafed to one, who, in a pure heart, rests on His great love.

Joy at the re-union.

Govinda's description of the meeting of Chaitanya Deva with his followers, when he came back to Puri, vividly pictures the animation and joy of the event. Murari Gupta fell on his knees before him; with clasped palms the veteran Vasudeva said, "My heart is made of stone, or it would have broken long ago, at being separated from you." Narahari met him in great joy carrying a flag in his hand, and Khanjan Acharyya, though lame, came swiftly before all others because of his great love for Chaitanya. The news of his arrival spread quickly all over the country, and Govinda Das gives an interesting and animated description of how the musicians Laksman and Balaram Das who sounded the horn called *Ram Singa* in the procession, together with Giri Puri, Narayan Tirtha and other great scholars speedily appeared on the scene to pay their respects to their beloved master. Raja Pratap Rudra used to visit the procession every day and when Chaitanya marched with it, the king followed him on foot, with the humility and respects of a disciple. On the 3rd of Magha Chaitanya came back to Puri, and Govinda Das finishes his diary here.

Govinda Das and his wife.

A word is now necessary about Govinda Das and his literary powers. Shortly after he had left home in a fit of anger, he met again with his wife. Chaitanya Deva came to Burdwan on his way to Puri, Govinda being with him; and here the interview took place.

* " Knowing somehow or other that I had come to Burdwan, she hastened to meet me. Tears were flowing from her eyes, while she fell at my feet saying, 'O come back and let us go home together. For a slight fault of mine you have renounced home; what provision will you make for me—your poor and devoted servant? Where am I to go, and who will give me charity? I cannot tell what fate is reserved for me! To support a cursed life, now I must go and beg. Hearing these words, I hung down my head and said to myself, " O God, O God." Since God's name makes the heart pure and raises it above all earthly attachments, I took refuge in His name." Chaitanya heard all that my wife had said and sweetly talked with her on the aims of the spiritual life. Hearing his words she was very sorrowful. She said nothing but began to weep bitterly,—looking round

* এই কথা বলিতে বলিতে মোর নারী।
কেমনে শুনিয়া তথা আইলা ত্বরা করি॥
দর দর পড়িতেছে অশ্রু দুনয়নে।
পড়িয়া আছাড় খেয়ে আমার চরণে॥
অশ্রু মুখে বলিতে লাগিলা এই বাত।
ফিরে চল গৃহে দুই যাই তব সাত॥
সামান্য কথায় তুমি সংসার ভেজিলে।
দাসীর উপায় তবে বল কি করিলে॥
কার দ্বারে গিয়া ভিক্ষা করিব কোথায়।
দয়া করি কেবা ভিক্ষা দিবে গো আমায়॥
কি আছে অদৃষ্টে মোর কার দ্বারে গিয়া।
ভিক্ষা করি বেড়াইব পেটের লাগিয়া॥
শুনিয়া তাহার বাণী মাথা হেট করি।
মনে মনে বলিতে লাগিনু হরি হরি॥
হরি স্মরণেতে কাটে যতেক বন্ধন।
তেকারণে মনে করি হরির চরণ॥
দয়াময় শ্রীচৈতন্য হেরিয়া তখন।
কহিতে লাগিলা তবে মধুর বচন॥

helplessly. Chaitanya tried to soothe her with religious advice, but she hid her face in her *sari* and wept even more bitterly. Seeing her in this condition, Chaitanya became full of compassion and said turning towards me, "You need not go with me, Govinda, I shall take another servant; you had better go home with your wife."

But how could poor Govinda leave the company of that divine man whose attraction had proved too strong for the princely Raghunath and Narottam, for Sanatana and Rupa, the ministers of the court of the emperor of Gaur, who had all left their vast worldly possessions, and joined the order of the Sannyasins for the great love they bore to the master? In fact he who makes us understand our relation to God, the only true relationship worth caring for, wields an irresistible power over us. When a prophet or a seer causes us to see the highest truth, this phenomenal world,—the fleeting and the perishable—passes out of our sight and He becomes more real to us than any object of the senses. So it was with Govinda and others. When Chaitanya expressed his desire to leave Govinda at Burdwan :—

Chaitanya leaves Govinda.

"I clasped his feet in deep anguish of heart and washed them with tears, but Chaitanya turned away and left me."

শুনিয়া প্রভুর বাণী হইয়া দুঃখিনী।
অশ্রুজলে ভিজাইতে লাগিল মেদিনী॥
কান্দিয়া আকুল বামা চারিদিকে চায়।
তত্ত্ব কথা বলি প্রভু তাহারে বুঝায়॥
শুনিয়া প্রভুর সেই কথা আচম্বিতে।
চক্ষু চাপি আঁচলেতে লাগিলা কান্দিতে॥
তাহার রোদনে প্রভুর দয়া উপজিল।
অমনি ফিরিয়া মোরে কহিতে লাগিল॥
প্রভু কহে গোবিন্দরে গৃহে থাক তুমি।
অন্য ভৃত্য সঙ্গে করি পুরী যাই আমি॥" Karcha.
এই বাক্যে মোর চক্ষু হতে অশ্রু ঝরে।
অমনি চরণ ধরি পড়িনু কাতরে॥
অশ্রুজলে পাখালিনু যুগল চরণ।
অমনি ফিরিয়া প্রভু করিলা গমন॥ Karcha.

Govinda could not, however, stay at Burdwan. He hastened to overtake Chaitanya Deva, dismissing a number of friends who had in the meantime assembled there to dissuade him from his resolve to renounce home as a Sannyasin. The devotion of Chaitanya's followers was wonderful. On the last page of the Karcha Govinda writes that he was entrusted by Chaitanya Deva, while at Puri, to carry a letter from him to Advaitacharyya at Santipur. This meant his absence from Puri for a few days. But when entrusted with this task :—* " Hearing this, tears started to my eyes, for I could not bear separation from the Lord." Vasudeva Sarvabhauma—the veteran scholar, had once said † " If a thunder bolt falls on my head or if my son dies, even that is bearable, but I cannot bear to hear Chaitanya abused." The great love in which Chaitanya Deva was held in Bengal continues even now among her people, not to speak of his more special followers—the Vaisnavas who believe him to be God himself. Even now in the village-homes of Bengal parents clasp their little children to their breasts and give them such tender names as 'Gaur Chandra' 'Navadvipa Chandra,' 'Nadevasi,' 'Nagaravasi,'—all indicating Chaitanya Deva or Navadvipa his birth place, hallowed in their eyes by his associations. In Tippera, close to the Ranir Dighi, there is a locality inhabited by the Malis or sweepers—a very low caste in Hindu society. I lived close to this neighbourhood for about eight years and scarcely a night passed that I did not hear these people sing in chorus for hours together, songs in praise of Chaitanya. " Come, if you would, see the god-man who does not believe in caste " was the burden of one of these familiar songs. Not only in Tippera but everywhere in Bengal, people of

The devotedness of his followers.

* এই বাক্য শুনি মোর চক্ষে বারি বহে।
প্রভুর বিরহ বাণ হৃদয়ে না সহে॥
Karcha.

† শিরে বজ্র পড়ে যদি পুত্র মরি যায়।
তবুও প্রভুর নিন্দা সহন না যায়॥

the low castes show an unusual enthusiasm in singing songs in praise of the great Brahmin who proclaimed the equality of all men in our society.

Descriptions of Nature.

Govinda Das's writings are simple and unassuming. The deep spirituality of his mind lends a charm to his descriptions of Nature. In speaking of the Nilgiri Hills he compares them to a great yogi lost in divine contemplation. He describes the sea near Kanya-kumari in the following few lines :—

* "We crossed Tamraparni and Chaitanya felt a desire to see the sea. We heard the roar of its waves from a distance. There is no mountain, no forest, no land,—no sound but that of the sea moaning incessantly! No word can express it but it looked so grand! There is no object that meets the eye, yet it is so impressive! One who has a sinless heart can alone appreciate the grandeur of the sea."

Free from orthodoxy.

Govinda's writings are free from narrow and orthodox views on religion. Chaitanya Deva visited the temple of Siva, of Sakti, of Ganapati and of Surya. Wherever and under whatever form or name God was worshipped, Chaitanya Deva took that as the emblem of the Lord of his heart; it acted as a sign to remind him of One whom he loved supremely. The feeling that burnt like holy incense in the temple of his heart was nourished by all that he saw, and in his

* "তাম্রপর্ণী পার হয়্যা সমুদ্রের ধারে।
প্রভু কন্যাকুমারী চলিলা দেখিবারে॥
পর্ব্বত কানন দেশ নাহি সেই ঠাঁই।
কেবল সিন্ধুর শব্দ শুনিবারে পাই॥
হুঁ হুঁ শব্দে সমুদ্র ডাকিছে নিরন্তর।
কি কব অধিক সেথা সকলি সুন্দর॥
দেখিবার কিছু নাই তথাপি শোভন।
সেখানে সৌন্দর্য্য দেখে শুদ্ধ যার মন॥

Karcha.

enlightened and spiritual view, gross forms and superstitious ideas were translated into the edifying truths of pure faith.

Hinduism accepts all worship and rejects none.

It is in the description of Govinda Das in the above strain that we find how the prophets and seers of India rejected nothing in the faith of the people, however gross it might apparently seem They always interpreted the thing worshipped in the highest light of faith and thus bridged over the gap between Fetishism and Vedantism. The lower classes in all parts of the world are bound to be superstitious, but in Hinduism the gross forms of worship are always in touch with the superior light of pure faith and thus without disturbing the faith of the illiterate, Hinduism makes its vast religious system a homogeneous whole in which the lowest represents merely a step in the ladder that reaches the highest. This catholic trait in the character of Chaitanya Deva is deliberately omitted or ignored by many of his subsequent biographers, who wanted to represent him as the leader and upholder of their own party,—the god of a special class of men and not the prophet for all that he was undoubtedly.

(b) *Chaitanya-Bhagavata by Vrindavan Das*

Vrindavan Das, born 1507 A.D

After Govinda Das's account of the few years of Chaitanya's life, the next biographical work about the great Vaisnava prophet was written by Vrindavan Das born in 1507 A D. He was a grandson of Srinivas, whose brother Srivasa's devotion to Chaitanya Deva is well known to the Vaisnava community. The spacious lawn before Srivasa's house was the favourite haunt of the Sankirtan parties led by Chaitanya Deva; many a night from the rise of the evening star on the western horizon till the appearance of the sun, the deep chanting of God's name was heard accompanied with the unceasing sounds of *khol* and *kartal* in this historic '*angina*' of Srivasa, but Vrindavan Das was only two years old when Chaitanya Deva left Navadvipa for good. The

Sribasa's *angina*.

biographer regrets in many passages of his work that he had not had the good fortune of seeing Chaitanya Deva.

Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

Vrindavan Das's Chaitanya Bhagavata is one of the standard works on his life and commands great influence amongst the Vaisnavas; it contains about 2,5000 lines and is written throughout in the metre called the Payar Chhanda. Vrindavan Das represents the views of the orthodox Vaisnavas and takes great pains to establish Chaitanya as an incarnation of Visnu. He resents the opposition to such views by the unbelieving non-Vaisnava communities with a freedom of language that transcends all limits of decency. Outside the orthodox Vaisnava society none will appreciate his rude and overbearing remarks about those who would not accept Nityananda, the friend of Chaitanya Deva and a Vaisnava apostle, as an incarnation of Balarama.

Attacks on the non-Vaisnavas.

Valuable side-lights.

But Vrindavan Das shows considerable powers as a historian. We feel a greater interest in the incidental description of the contemporary events that he gives than in his delineation of the subject of his memoir. He describes Chaitanya Deva's life in the light of the Bhagavata which gives an account of Sri Krisna's life. Yet the Krisna of Vrindavan, Mathura and Kuruksetra is as different from Chaitanya of Navadvipa as ever were any two characters in history. Vrindavan Das in his zeal to prove the identity of the two personalities hopelessly confounds both. It is, as I have said, in the incidental description of contemporary events that he shows the hand of a competent historian, and the biography greatly interests us when we study the minor facts related in it. It is also an invaluable source of information regarding the lives of many of Chaitanya Deva's followers. He begins his work with a reference to the great Vaisnava scholars and worthies who lived at Navadvipa immediately before Chaitanya Deva's birth and also to the condition of that city at the time. We have already quoted a passage from these accounts on page 357.

Chaitanya's contemporaries.

*"Some of these great Vaisnavas had been born in Navadvipa; others in Chittagong, Rarh, Orissa and Sylhet. They were born in different places, but they had all met there. As the Lord (Chaitanya) would be born there, they were drawn to the place. Srivasa and Sri Rama, the scholars, Sri Chandra Sekhar Deva, highly esteemed everywhere, Murari Gupta—the healer of all earthly maladies (belonging to the physician caste)—these eminent Vaisnavas were born in Sylhet. Pundarika Vidyavinod of pearless learning, Chaitanya Vallabh Datta and Vasu Deva Datta, were born in Chittagong. Hari Das was born at Burhan in Western Bengal. In the village Ek Chaka (Burdwan) was born the great apostle Nityananda. All of them had met in Navadvipa."

* "কারো জন্ম নবদ্বীপে কারো চাটিগ্রামে।
কেহ রাঢ়ে উড় দেশে শ্রীহট্টে পশ্চিমে॥
নানা স্থানে অবতীর্ণ হইল ভক্তগণ।
নবদ্বীপে আসি হইল সবার মিলন॥
নবদ্বীপে হইল প্রভুর অবতার।
অতএব নবদ্বীপে মিলন সবার॥
শ্রীবাস পণ্ডিত আর শ্রীরাম পণ্ডিত।
শ্রীচন্দ্রশেখরদেব ত্রৈলক্য-পূজিত॥
ভব রোগ বৈদ্য মুরারি নাম যার।
শ্রীহট্টে এসব বৈষ্ণবের অবতার॥
পণ্ডরিক বিদ্যানিধি বৈষ্ণব প্রধান।
চৈতন্য বল্লভ দত্ত বাসুদেব নাম॥
চাটিগ্রামে হইল ইহা সবার প্রকাশ।
বুঢ়নে হইল অবতীর্ণ হরিদাস॥
রাঢ় মাঝে একচাকা নামে আছে গ্রাম।
যথা অবতীর্ণ নিত্যানন্দ ভগবান॥
নবদ্বীপে আসি সবে হইল মিলন॥"

Chaitanya Bhagavata.

These men in subsequent times obtained celebrity for their great faith. They were like torches that had only required the touch of Chaitanya Deva to kindle them.

The people of Navadvipa, addicted to worldliness.

After describing the glories of Navadvipa, its paraphernalia of educational institutions, and the customs, and avocations of its residents and how they spent whole nights in praise of Yogi Pal, Gopi Pal, Mahi Pal and other kings of the Pala dynasty, Vrindavan Das goes on to say:—*"They sometimes sing songs in honour of Manasa Devi and keep up whole nights. There are many others who worship Vasuli with presents, others who offer meat and wine for sacrificial purposes. Music, dances, songs are always going on in the place and there is noise and bustle on all sides and men are without faith in Krisna. Religious teachings are thrown away on them. They do not care to take the name of Krisna. They are always vaunting their caste and their learning."

Chaitanya's visit to Gaya.

I quote the passage in which Chaitanya Deva's visit to Gaya is described.

†"The son of Sachi Devi (Chaitanya) entered Gaya, the holiest shrine in India. He came to Brahmakunda and bathed in it; he paid his respect to the departed spirit of his father in a

* "দম্ভ করি বিষহরি পূজে কোন জন।
বাশুলি পূজয়ে কেহ নানা উপহারে।
মদ্য মাংস দিয়া কেহ যক্ষ পূজা করে॥
নিরবধি নৃত্য গীত বাদ্য কোলাহল।
না শুনে কৃষ্ণের নাম পরম মঙ্গল॥
বলিলেও কেহ নাহি লয় কৃষ্ণ নাম।
নিরবধি বিদ্যাকুল করেন বাখান॥
Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

† "গয়াতে প্রবিষ্ট হইল শ্রীশচী নন্দন।
গয়া তীর্থ মাঝে প্রভু প্রবিষ্ট হইয়া।
ব্রহ্ম কুণ্ডে আসি প্রভু করিলেন স্নান॥
যথোচিত কৈলা পিতৃদেবের সম্মান॥

fitting manner, and being admitted to the *chakraver* he hastened to see the lotus-feet of Visnu. The Brahmins stood around the feet; heaps of garlands of flowers were offered there;—sweet scents, flowers, incense and clothes were offered at the feet, so numerous that no one could keep record of them. The priests, clothed in holy attire, were describing the glories of the Divine Feet. 'These Feet that Ye see here,' they said, 'the god Siva has placed on his breast and called himself blessed thereby. The goddess Laksmi's whole soul rests in the lotus feet of the Lord—the king Bali took them on his head and was reconciled to his lot in the nether world. To one who contemplates the feet of Visnu for a moment, Death

The lotus-feet.

তবে আইলেন চক্রবেড়ের ভিতরে।
পাদপদ্ম দেখিবারে চলিলা সত্বরে॥
বিপ্রগণ বেড়িয়া আছেন শ্রীচরণ।
শ্রীচরণে মালা যেন দেউল প্রমাণ॥
গন্ধ পুষ্প ধূপ দীপ বস্ত্র অলঙ্কার।
কত পড়িয়াছে লেখা জোখা নাহি তার॥
চতুর্দ্দিকে দিব্য রূপ ধরি বিপ্রগণ।
করিতেছে পাদপদ্ম প্রভাব বর্ণন॥
কালীনাথ হৃদয়ে ধরিলা যে চরণ।
যে চরণ নিরবধি লক্ষ্মীর জীবন॥
বলি-শিরে আবির্ভাব হইল যে চরণ।
সেই এই দেখ যত ভাগ্যবন্তগণ॥
তিলার্দ্ধেক যে চরণ ধ্যান করা মাত্র।
যম তার না হয়েন অধিকার পাত্র॥
যোগেশ্বর সবের দুর্লভ যে চরণ।
সেই এই দেখ যত ভাগ্যবন্তগণ॥
যে চরণে ভাগীরথী হইল প্রকাশ।
নিরবধি হৃদয়ে না ছাড়েন যার দাস॥
যোগেশ্বর সবার দুর্লভ যে চরণ।
তাই এই দেখ যত ভাগ্যবন্তগণ॥

loses all his horror. The great Yogis in their highest vision catch but a glimpse of these feet. Oh! How fortunate are ye who see with your eyes this holy spectacle—the feet of Visnu, from which sprang the Ganges, which rest on the head of Ananta, the thousand-headed serpent, and which are worshipped by Laksmi. Fortunate are ye to have a sight of these feet!"

Overflowing emotions

"He became overpowered with feelings of joy which could not be concealed, and he trembled in a sort of ecstasy,—the incessant streams of the Ganges, as it were, flowed from his eyes."

Isvara Puri again

Isvara Puri had by this time come to Gaya, eager for Chaitanya's company, and met him on the threshhold of the Gaya temple. As Chaitanya saw him he bowed to him in deep reverence and said *"Blessed is my journey to Gaya, for I have seen you. If offering Pinda can secure heaven to my dead father, surely the sight of a saint like yourself is a hundred times better. You are better than all shrines, Revered Sir, for the sight of you cleanses the soul. Save me from this sea of the world! I resign my body and soul to your

চরণ প্রভাব শুনি বিপ্রগণ মুখে।
আবিষ্ট হইল প্রভু নিজানন্দ সুখে॥
অশ্রুধারা বহে দুই শ্রীপদ্ম নয়নে।
অবিচ্ছিন্ন গঙ্গা বহে শ্রীপাদ দর্শনে॥
Chaitanya-Bhagavata.

* প্রভু বলে গয়াযাত্রা সফল আমার।
যতক্ষণ না দেখিলাম চরণ তোমার॥
তীর্থে পিণ্ড দিলে সে নিস্তার পিতৃগণে।
তোমা নিরখিলে মাত্র কোটি পিতৃগণ।
সেইক্ষণে সর্ব্ব বন্ধ পায় বিমোচন॥
অতএব তীর্থ নহে তোমার সমান।
তীর্থের পরম তুমি মঙ্গল প্রধান॥
সংসার সমুদ্র হতে উদ্ধার আমারে।
এই আমি দেহ সমর্পিলাম তোমারে॥

care. Kindly teach me how I may take refuge at the lotus feet of Visnu."

He was again in a trance, and when he recovered his senses, he recited Sanskrit verses and said, * 'O Krisna, O my father, O Lord of my soul, whither hast Thou gone and left me,' and he fell on the bare ground and his handsome person was besmeared with dust.

(c) *Chaitanya-Mangal by Jayananda*

The next biographical account of Chaitanya Deva that we come across, was written by Jayananda. Jayananda was born in 1513 A.D. He belonged to a family, from which sprang Raghunandan, the law-giver of Bengal of the 16th century. Jayananda's father Subuddhi Misra was a noted personality of the Vaisnava community, about whom frequent references are found in Govinda Das's Karcha, Vaisnavachara-darpana, Charitamrita and other works. Jayananda when a child saw Chaitanya in the house of his grand-father. He was commonly called by the pet name of Guia. It is said that Chaitanya took some interest in the boy and gave him the Sanskritic name of Jayananda by which he was latterly known.

Jayananda, born 1513 A.D.

There are certain historical points, in which Jayananda differs from other writers, and from the traditions current in the country. It is generally believed that Chaitanya's father Jagannath Misra was originally an inhabitant of Dhaka-Daksina in Sylhet. But Jayananda refers to Jayanagar in Sylhet as the native village of Jagannath Misra. The Muhammadan devotee, who obtained a great celebrity in the Vaisnava community, under the name of Hari Das by his staunch devotion to Chaitanya Deva and by

The new facts brought to light by him.

কৃষ্ণ পাদপদ্মের অমৃত রস পান।
আমারে তরাও তুমি এই চাহি দান॥"
* কৃষ্ণরে বাপরে তোমায় পাইব কোথায়॥

accepting his faith, is generally believed to have been born in Burhana but according to Jayananda, Hari Das was born in the village Bhatakalagachi on the bank of the river Svarna. We come to know from Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangal that Chaitanya Deva's ancestors came to Bengal from Jajpur in Orissa.

The passing away of Chaitanya Deva

The history of how Chaitanya Deva passed away is a mystery; it is not related either in the Chaitanya-Bhagavata or in the Chaitanya-Charitamrita—the two great authoritative works on Chaitanya's life. It is said that devout Vaisnavas felt such pain in describing the story, that many of them scrupulously avoided narrating it in their biographies. It is true that once Chaitanya fell into a trance at the sight of the moon reflected in the sea as he witnessed it from the Orissa coasts—the scene reminded him of Krisna and he leapt into the ocean in an unconscious condition; but it is also related that he was shortly after rescued by a fisherman and carefully tended, till restored to consciousness. This fact in his life is well known. The more advanced members of our community, finding no other clue as to how he passed away, have lately started a theory that Chaitanya Deva was at this time lost in the waters and never again found. But the old records distinctly relate how he was saved by a fisherman; so to assert in the teeth of this evidence that he met with his death in the sea is certainly unwarranted and no historian can credit it. Our country-sides are full of fables, relating to the manner in which he finally disappeared; it is said that he embraced the figure of Gopinath (Krisna) made of Nimba wood and worshipped in a temple at Puri, and that there he suddenly vanished. The priests of the temple declare that Chaitanya Deva's corporal frame, which was not of gross matter, was lost in Gopinath's figure; they point to a golden mark in the image, asserting that it has been there, ever since the time when Chaitanya Deva disappeared. A similar story is related by the priests of the Puri temple, who associate the disappearance of the devotee with the

figure of Jagannath. As the biographers of Chaitanya Deva are generally silent on the point, fables like these could pass current in the Vaisnava community and they have been long believed by the people.

An historical account.

Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangal, which has been racently unearthed in the shape of some old manuscript-copies of the work by Babu Nagendra Nath Vasu, gives a version of Chaitanya's passing away from the earth in a manner which we may accept as historically true. It is told by our author that in the month of Asarh (July) Chaitanya Deva, while leading a Sankirtana party in procession, fell into a trance and as he proceeded leaning on a companion, his eyes streaming with tears, and his hands uplifted to heaven, with a smile which made his face divinely radiant, he was hurt in the foot by a brick, of which he was totally unconscious at the time. On coming to himself he felt illness with great pain in the foot and said to his companions, that after two days he would die. He caught fever that day, which increased and on Sunday the 7th day of the waning moon, in the month of July, 1534, at about 3 P.M. he left his mortal frame.

A partial corroboration of the story by Lochana Das.

This we find in Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangal. From an account given by Lochana Das in his life of Chaitanya—a subsequent work, we are led to surmise that his body was immediately removed to the temple of Jagannath in Puri and the priests made a grave for it in the floor of the temple. They closed the doors of the temple against all visitors,—Chaitanya's immediate followers not excepted, while they were placing the body in it and repairing the floor after burial. The passing away of Chaitanya Deva was thus made a mystery by the Pandas, who now earn money from the credulous pilgrims by relating romantic stories about his disappearance and by pointing to the golden mark in the figure of Gopinath, which, they describe as the mark of the passage by which Chaitanya Deva melted into the figure of that god.

A page of old history.

Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangal discloses some other facts of the history of Bengal. It is related in it, that Husain Shah, the Emperor of Gaur (1494—1525) heard of a prophecy in the land that the Brahmins of Navadvipa would subvert the Muslim power, establish a Hindu kingdom and occupy Gaur. The prophecy was widely current and the emperor was alarmed by it. Here is the passage describing the steps that he adopted to avert the evil.

* "By the emperor's orders the Brahmins were deprived of their caste or killed. Whenever a conch was sounded in a house, emperor's soldiers proceeded towards it at once and killed the inmates there and looted all property. If one was found wearing a *tilak* on the forehead or the sacred thread he was bound hand and foot. The temples were destroyed and shrines were desecrated. The Tulasi plants and the Asvattha trees (sacred amongst the Hindus) were uprooted by hundreds. Bathing in the Ganges was prohibited. The citizens of Navadvipa became alarmed for their lives. The Muhammadans made the village of Pirulya near Navadvipa, their

* আচম্বিতে নবদ্বীপে হইল রাজ ভয়।
ব্রাহ্মণ ধরিয়া রাজা জাতি প্রাণ লয়॥
নবদ্বীপে শঙ্খধ্বনি শুনে যার ঘরে।
ধন প্রাণ লয়ে তার জাতি নাশ করে॥
কপালে তিলক দেখে যজ্ঞ সূত্র কাঁধে।
ঘর দ্বার লোটে তারে সেইখানে বাঁধে॥
দেউল দেহরা ভাঙ্গে উপাড়ে তুলসী।
প্রাণ ভয়ে স্থির নহে নবদ্বীপ বাসী॥
অশ্বত্থ পনস বৃক্ষ কাটে শত শত।
গঙ্গাজল বিরোধিল হাট ঘাট যত॥
পিরুল্যা গ্রামেতে বৈসে যতেক যবন।
উচ্ছন্ন করিল নবদ্বীপের ব্রাহ্মণ॥
ব্রাহ্মণে যবনে বাদ যুগে যুগে আছে।
বিষম পিরুল্যা গ্রাম নবদ্বীপের কাছে॥

station and were determined to extirpate the Brahmins of Navadvipa. A false report had reached the Emperor of Gaur that the Brahmins of Navadvipa would oust the Muhammadans from the country; it was written in their sacred books and the citizens of Navadvipa were all expert archers. The emperor believed in this prophecy and he ordered a general devastation of Navadvipa. Vasudeva Sarvabhauma, son of Visarada, with his family, removed to Orissa, leaving Bengal. The king of Utkala was then the illustrious Pratap Rudra, famous for his valour in war. He worshipped the great scholar of Navadvipa, presenting him with a golden throne. The brother of Sarvabhauma was Vidyavachaspati, who remained in Gaur and their father Visarada proceeded to Benares, where he settled."

It is further related that the emperor was afterwards convinced that the Brahmins of Navadvipa were innocent. He became remorseful and not only stopped all oppression but ordered the Hindu temples that were damaged, to be repaired. From this time forward he was kind towards the Hindus. We

গৌড়েশ্বরের বিদ্যমানে দিল মিথ্যাবাদ।
নবদ্বীপের বিপ্র তোমা করিবে প্রমাদ॥
গৌড়ে ব্রাহ্মণ রাজা হবে হেন আছে।
নিশ্চিন্ত না থাকিও প্রমাদ হবে পাছে॥
নবদ্বীপে ব্রাহ্মণ অবশ্য হবে রাজা।
গন্ধর্ব্ব লিখন আছে ধনুর্দ্ধর প্রজা॥
এই মিথ্যা কথা রাজার মনেতে লাগিল।
নদীয়া উচ্ছন্ন কর রাজা আজ্ঞা দিল॥
বিশারদ সুত সার্ব্বভৌম ভট্টাচার্য্য।
স্বয়ং উৎকলে গেল ছাড়ি গৌড় রাজ্য॥
উৎকলে প্রতাপরুদ্র ধনুর্দ্ধর রাজা।
রত্ন সিংহাসনে সার্ব্বভৌমে কৈল প্রজা॥
তাঁর ভ্রাতা বিদ্যাবাচস্পতি গৌড়বাসী।
বিশারদ নিবাস করিলা বারাণসী॥"

Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangal.

have got references also in Chaitanya-Charitamrita to Husain Shah's oppression of the Hindus of Navadvipa and other places in the earlier part of his reign. But the Brahmin families whose caste was polluted by being forced to take water from the hands of the Muhammadans stationed in the village of Pirulya lost their status in Hindu society, and after more than four hundred years, the Tagore families of Calcutta, who represent a class of Pirulya Brahmins, as they have been since called, have to a considerable extent regained their social position.

The Pirulya Brahmins.

Jayananda gives a list of authors who had written accounts of Chaitanya Deva's life before him, amongst which the works of Paramanandapuri, Gopal Basu and Gauri Das, mentioned by him, have not yet been recovered. We find it also mentioned in his work that Govinda Das, a blacksmith by caste, followed Chaitanya Deva in his travels in Southern India.

(*d*) *Chaitanya-Charitamrita by Krisna Das*

By far the greatest of the biographers of Chaitanya Deva,—one who by his pure and lofty character, by his unique scholarship and no less by his hoary old age commanded the greatest respect of the Vaisnava community of the period, was Krisna Das Kaviraj of Jhamatpur in Burdwan. Born in 1517 of a poor Vaidya family, he was inured to hardships from his earliest childhood. His father Bhagiratha used to earn a small pittance by following the avocation which belonged to his caste, *viz.*, that of a physician. At his death Krisna Das was only 6 years old. He had a brother Syam Das, 2 years his junior. Their mother Sunanda could find no way to maintain herself and her two children. But an end soon came to her care and anxieties: the hand of death took her away, only a few months after she had become a widow, and the poor children

Krisna Das born in 1517 A.D.

Early misfortunes and Vaisnava influence.

were placed in charge of his relatives. Krisna Das was not much cared for and he grew up to be a lad of 16, not running wild as such boys are likely to become, but sober and quiet—a prey to melancholia and occasional gloom caused by the bereavements he had suffered which weighed upon his soul. A follower of the saint Nityananda—Minaketana Ramdas by name, paid a visit to Jhamatpur at this time. His preachings produced a deep effect upon Krisna Das who now yearned for the religious life. Ramdas was, however, treated to ridicule by Syam Das, the younger brother of our author who took the matter sorely to heart.

Minaketana had gone away, but the disappointment caused in Krisna Das's mind by his brother's conduct, together with the impressions of a holy life left on him by the devout Vaisnava, made him give up the idea of following any wordly pursuits. It is said that at this time Nityananda appeared to him in a dream and advised him to go to the Vrinda groves and pass his life there. The dream became a real force with him and he could not resist the command. He walked about 800 miles on foot, begging alms for his subsistence and arrived at Vrindavan, where the purity of his life and his high character even as a boy interested the six distinguished Gosvamis, the appostles of the Vaisnava faith of that time, who volunteered to take care of the young man's education.

A dream.

Goes to Vrindavan and settles there.

The beauty of the Vrinda groves, the scenes of which are rendered ever sacred by their association with Krisna, added to the austere lives of the apostles, Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva, Gopal Bhatta and the two Raghunaths and their great learning, all combined to make lasting impressions on Krisna Das. He became a ready and willing disciple of the six Gosvamis and advanced rapidly in his studies. Within a few years, he had become a profound Sanskrit scholar and had written two works of great merit in that language. His Govinda-Lilamrita is a masterpiece

Under the six Gosvamis.

Govinda-Lilamrita, Karnamrita and other works.

of poetry, and his annotations of Krisna-Karnamrita attest his great erudition. He wrote some small books in Bengali, namely—Advaita-Sutra Karcha, Svarupa-Varnana and Ragmayi-Kana and in all of these Bengali treatises occur occasional prose-passages which may be taken—with the exception of those in the Sunya Purana of the 9th century, as some of the earliest specimens of Bengali prose. It is worthwhile perhaps to point out that even the biographical notes of Govinda Das were written in poetry. When even arithmetic was composed in rhyme, how could biography be prose?

A religious celibate and student all his life, practising the austerities of a Sannyasin,—he had reached the age of 79 when a change came over him. He had never cared for earthly fame or glory,—his aim had been only to acquire sound scholarship in the theological lore of the Vaisnavas, and as an unassuming soul to quit his mortal frame in due time and quietly pass into the heaven of his Krisna from the sacred banks of the Jumna. But a herculean task came upon him in his old age unsolicited and he could not avoid it.

Chaitanya-Charitamrita commenced when he was 79.

The Chaitanya-Bhagavata of Vrindavan Das used to be read in Vrindavan by the holy men of the place every evening, and they felt that the last portion of Chaitanya's life was not described in the work with that completeness which the Vaisnava community required in a recognised biography. One evening when Krisna Das sat in his cottage counting the beads of his rosary—old and infirm as he was and suffering from the various diseases which age brings on, a deputation of the Vaisnavas of the place, consisting of Govinda Gosvami, Jadavacharyya Gosvami, Bhugarbha Gosvami, Chaitanya Das, Kumudananda Chakravarti, Krisna Das Chakravarti, Sivananda Chakravarti and of others, waited on the old scholar requesting him to undertake to write a life of Chaitanya Deva. The hoary-headed Krisna Das pleaded his age and weakness, but they insisted on

his undertaking the work. At this moment the priest of the temple of Govindaji came to him and presented him with an *Adeshamalya* – a garland of flowers—a sign of divine command, from the temple, and the request made by the deputation became by this act of the priest inviolable as a religious injunction. Krisna Das had no other alternative than to take up the work. He was helped by the materials given him by Sridas, Lokanath Gosvami, Gopal Bhatta and Raghunath Das. Besides this he received important help from the scholarly notes on Chaitanya's life by Murari Gupta and Svarupa-Damodar and from Chaitanya-Bhagavata by Vrindavan Das, and Chaitanya-Chandrodaya by Kavi Karnapur. But from these materials we can scarcely gain any idea of the vast erudition and extraordinary pains with which he assimilated and shaped all that came into his hands. I give in the foot notes the names of the Sanskrit works* to which reference is made in the celebrated pages of Chaitanya-Charitamrita (lit., the nectar of the life of Chaitanya), as his great work is called. It is a monument of industry and scholarship and of the devotional features that characterise Vaisnavism. Up to now no other Bengali work of such patient and varied scholarship has been produced. But the language of the book displays an uncouth

The vast scholarship displayed by the author.

Defects of style.

*1. Sakuntala.
2. Adipurana.
3. Ujjvala Nilmani.
4. Kavya Prakasa.
5. Krisna Sandarbha.
6. Krama Sandarbha.
7. Gita Govinda.
8. Chaitanya Chandrodaya Nataka
9. Jagannatha Vallava Nataka
10. Danakeli Kaumudi.
11. Nataka Chandrika.
12. Padmavali.
13. Padmapurana.
14. Govindalilamrita.
15. Visnu Purana.
16. Visva Prakasa.
17. Brihat Gautamiya Tantra.
18. Amarakosa.
19. Uttaracharita.
20. Ekadasitattva.
21. Kri-nakarnamrita.
22. Kurma Purana.
23. Garuda Purana.
24. Gautamiya Tantra
25. Narada Pancharatra.
26. Nrisinha Purana
27. Panchadasi.
28. Panini Sutra
29. Varaha Purana.
30. Vidagdha Madhava.

admixture of the dialect of lower Bengal with that of the upper provinces. The author had long left his native land, and his own language had grown to be a curious medley of Hindi and Bengali. His profound scholarship in Sanskrit besides made him import high-sounding Sanskrit words into the mixed language used in his work, and a student of Bengali must admit that such importation did not add any beauty or grace to his style. Words like সাধুমার্গানুগমন একাদশ্যুপবাস, ধাত্রাশ্বত্থ, সেবানামপরাধাদি, স্বধর্ম্মএলভাকপুমান, কর্ত্তুমকর্ত্তুমন্যথা and দেহকান্ত্যা which display a peculiar formation of Sanskrit *Samasas*, together with a sprinkling of Hindi words such as ছুঁই, কৈছে and করোঁয়া and even of Urdu চাচা and নানা, all combined to make the work an *omnium gatherum* of heterogenous elements, which is far from being the graceful and elegant Bengali for which some of the Vaisnava works are noted The author was no skilled hand in writing Bengali, but this does not detract, in any considerable degree from the unique merit which his work possesses and for which it has found a distinguished and a permanent place in the literature of the Bengali Vaisnavas.

Chaitanya-Charitamrita contains 15050 *slokas* or "couplets" and is divided into three main *Khandas* or cantos,—the Adi, the Madhya and the Antya *Khanda*. The first *khanda* contains 2500 *slokas*, the second 6050, and the third 6500. The poem discusses

31. Vira Charita.
32. Brihannaradiya Purana.
33. Brahma Samhita.
34. Brahma Vaivarta Purana.
35. Vaisnava Tosini.
36. Bhagavata Gita.
37. Bhakti Rasamrita Sindhu.
38. Bhakti Sandarbha.
39. Bhavartha Dipika.
40. Bhagavata Purana.
41. Mulamasa Tattva.
42. Manu Samhita.
43. Yamuna Caryya Vrata.
44. Ramayana.
45. Laghu Bhagavatamrita.
46. Lalita Madhava.
47. Sasvata Tantra.
48. Svarupa Gosvami Karcha.
49. Sahitya Darpana.
50. Samksepa Bhagavatamrita.
51. Hari Bhakti Vilasa.
52. Hari Bhakti Sukhodaya.
53. Vedanta Darsana.
54. Bhakti Lahari.
55. Bharati.
56. Bhagavata Sandarbha.
57. Mahabharata.
58. Kritalakamandara Stotra.
59. Rupa Gosvami Karcha.
60. Stavamala.

the views of the Vaisnavas on religion learnedly, with profuse quotations from Sanskrit texts. The doctrines of Chaitanya Deva are explained elaborately and one unacquainted with the discourses of the six Schools of Indian Philosophy cannot follow the great Bengali work properly. There are very few Bengalis within our knowledge who can interpret the scholarly expositions of the author aright. With the lay Vaisnavas, however, the great attraction of the book lies in its delineation of Chaitanya's last days. The *slokas* that he recited, his religious ecstasies displaying the highest poetic flights,—which at times made him appear like a mad man and at others like a heavenly spirit, and not unoften as a great scholar whose sparkling discourses were listened to with rapt attention by the multitude—all have been graphically described in this masterly work of Krisna Das Kaviraj. The last portion of Chaitanya's life as told by Krisna Das shows how God-vision became more and more frequent with him till the emaciated body could bear these trances no longer,—how the sight of a flower, a ripple on the sea, a tree, or a cloud would throw him into a rapture, and he would shed tears of joy seeing God in them, and stand unconscious with his hands uplifted towards heaven for hours together,—how the songs of Jayadeva sung by a Vaisnava maiden in the Puri temple, made him run like a mad man, his feet pierced by thorns and dropping blood, and how in an unconscious state he was carried to his home by his followers. Sometimes for a whole night he would sing the songs of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Chandidas explaining as he sang—the relation of the soul to God referred to in these songs. Thoughts of the matter-of-fact world scarcely occurred to him. He had not visited his poor mother Sachi Devi and his devoted wife Visnupriya ever since he took the Sannyasin's vow and had never visited his dear motherland of Navadvipa. The people of that place came to Puri frequently to have a sight of one whom they named Navadvipa-Chandra or the moon of Navadvipa. He would

The excellence of the work.

The last days of Chaitanya, his ecstasies.

occasionally send messages to his bereaved mother, saying that he was well, and that she should not feel any anxiety on his account. In the last year of his life he sent the following message :—

Last message to mother.

*"O mother, at a time when I should have ministered to your comforts, I took the vow of a Sannyasin, I turned mad and committed a great sin; pray forgive me, for I am your child and am always bound to obey you."

But this was only a fleeting idea. The God-vision came upon him again and he fell into a trance immediately after delivering the message.

I quote below a small passage from Chaitanya-Charitamrita in which the author points out the distinction between the love of God and earthly passions.

†"Kama—earthly passion (lit. desire) and Prema (love) are two different things. One is pure gold and the other—iron. When a man seeks an object for the satisfaction of his own desire, he is said to be prompted by Kama, but one inspired by a desire to fulfil the will of God, acts under Prema or love. Kama makes a man seek his own pleasure but Prema makes him do things in which God delights. The idea of satisfying people by pandering to their wishes (লোক ধর্ম্ম),

Kama and Prema.

* "তোমার সেবা ছাড়ি আমি করিলুঁ সন্ন্যাস।
বাউল হইয়া আমি কৈলুঁ ধর্ম্ম নাশ॥
এই অপরাধ তুমি না লইহ আমার।
তোমার অধীন আমি পুত্র সে তোমার॥"

—*Antya-khanda.*

† "কাম প্রেম দোঁহাকার বিভিন্ন লক্ষণ।
লৌহ আর হেম যৈছে স্বরূপ বিলক্ষণ॥
আত্মেন্দ্রিয় প্রীতি ইচ্ছা তারে বলি কাম।
কৃষ্ণেন্দ্রিয় প্রীতি ইচ্ছা তার প্রেম নাম॥
কামের তাৎপর্য্য নিজ সম্ভোগ কেবল।
কৃষ্ণ সুখ তাৎপর্য্যমাত্র প্রেমত প্রবল॥

the ministering to the passions that have their origin in one's own body (দেহ ধর্ম্ম), the fulfilling of the commands enjoined in the Vedas (বেদ ধর্ম্ম), wordly pursuits (কর্ম্ম), feelings of shame, of physical pleasure and of personal gratification,—attention to inviolable custom and attachment for one's kith and kin—all these should be given up, and God alone should be adored. Friends and relations will be against such a man, but he should forsake all for the sake of God. When one has attained this stage, a true devotion for God may be said to have sprung up in him;—his life becomes like a white cloth without stain. So the difference between Kama and Prema is great, Kama or desire is darkness impenetrable, which does not allow us to see beyond self, and Prema (love) is the glorious sun which illuminates the truths of the whole universe."

In describing Chaitanya Deva's visit to Vrindavan the scholarly author displays poetic emotion. He writes :—

Chaitanya's visit to Vrindavan.

* "On seeing Chaitanya, the very trees and creepers of the Vrinda groves burst into blossom and shed tears of joy in the dews that fell from their leaves. Their boughs gently touched the feet of Chaitanya with their tribute of flowers and fruits, and

লোকধর্ম্ম দেহধর্ম্ম বেদধর্ম্ম কর্ম্ম।
লজ্জা ধৈর্য্য দেহ সুখ আত্মসুখ মর্ম্ম॥
দুস্ত্যজ্য আর্য্যপথ নিজ পরিজন।
স্বজন করিব যত তাড়ন ভর্ৎসন॥
সর্ব্বত্যাগ করি করে কৃষ্ণের ভজন।
কৃষ্ণ সুখ হেতু করে প্রেম সেবন॥
ইহাকে কহি যে কৃষ্ণে দৃঢ় অনুরাগ।
স্বচ্ছ ধৌত বস্ত্রে যেন নাহি কোন দাগ॥
অতএব কাম প্রেমে বহুত অন্তর।
কাম অন্ধতমঃ প্রেম নির্ম্মল ভাস্কর॥"—*Adi-khanda.*

* "প্রভু দেখি বৃন্দাবনের বৃক্ষ লতাগণ।
অঙ্কুর পুলক মধু অশ্রু বরিষণ॥

looked as if they welcomed a friend with gifts. Chaitanya in an ecstasy of love embraced each tree and creeper and by the silent prayers of his soul dedicated the flowers and fruits to Krisna."

The author's apology.

On completing his work in 1615 after nine years of unremitting toil, Krisna Das writes :—

* "It is foolish to assert that I am writing this book by my own power; my body is like an inert log; I am old, decripit, blind and deaf; my hand trembles as I write, and I have no power to hold to my own ideas; I am suffering from various diseases, and cannot move or sit properly."

The tragic end.

He was 97 years old at the time. The MS., however, was ready and along with other works of the six Gosvamis was sent to Bengal for circulation. The MSS. were being carried in a bullock cart and Srinivas—one of the latter-day Vaisnava worthies—was in charge of this, under escort of several armed men from Vrindavan. When after some days, they reached Vanavisnupur in the district of Bankura, they met a man who made enquiries as to what was being carried in the cart. The guard said, "it was treasure"; for indeed in their eyes these valuable works were a treasure. The news was carried to Raja Vira Hamvira of Vanavisnupur by the spy as the enquirer

ফুল ফল ভরি ডাল পড়ে প্রভু পায়।
বন্ধু দেখি বন্ধু যেন ভেট লৈয়া যায়॥
প্রতি বৃক্ষ লতা প্রভু করে আলিঙ্গন।
পুষ্পাদি ধ্যানে করে কৃষ্ণে সমর্পন॥"

Chaitanya-Charitamrita

* "আমি লিখি ইহা মিথ্যা করি অনুমান।
আমার শরীর কাষ্ঠপুত্তলি সমান॥
বৃদ্ধ জরাতুর আমি অন্ধ বধির।
হস্তহালে মনোবুদ্ধি নাহি রহে স্থির॥
নানা রোগগ্রস্ত চলিতে বসিতে না পারি।"

Antya-khanda.

was. The Raja had a strong party of robbers under him who carried on depredations in the neighbouring countries. In the night they beat the guards, and looted the cart and disappeared.

Srinivas, in whose charge the valuable MSS. were, sorely dismayed at this event, instantly sent a messenger to Vrindavan with the news. No copies of the MSS. were left there, and this meant the loss of the labours of the renowned scholars of so many years. The death of Krisna Das is thus described in a work named Vivarta Vilas :—

* "The news reached Raghunath and Krisna Das and both of them fell to the ground and began to lament aloud. Old and infirm Krisna Das could not stand the shock; he could not rise from the ground and while in this condition passed away in great sorrow."

The work was subsequently recovered, however, and now enjoys the highest popularity in the Vaisnava community. Pity that its learned author met so tragic a death, in his despair of its being ever recovered. The high esteem, in which the book is held by the Vaisnavas, is evidenced by the following remarks of the late veteran Vaisnava Pandit Haradhan Datta Bhaktinidhi of Vadanganj (Dist. Hooghly).

The popularity of the book.

'The day I consider as wasted, in which I have not read a chapter of this book.'

Referring to the author's unfortunate death, the Pandit writes :—

"I cannot relate the story of Krisna Das's death. One ought not to write about anything so sad. If I attempt to do so, my heart breaks."

* "রঘুনাথ কবিরাজ শুনিলা দুজনে।
* আছাড় খাইয়া কান্দি লুটাইয়া ভূমে॥
বৃদ্ধকালে কবিরাজ না পারে উঠিতে।
অন্তর্ধান করিলেন দুঃখের সহিতে॥"

Vaivarta-Vilas.

(e) *Chaitanya-Mangal by Lochan Das*

We shall here touch upon another biography of Chaitanya Deva which also enjoys a great popularity. It is the Chaitanya-Mangal by Trilochan Das commonly known as Lochan Das. Lochan Das was born in 1523 A.D. at Kogram, a village 30 miles to the north of Burdwan and 10 miles from Guskhara, a station on the East Indian Railway. He was a Vaidya by caste. His father's name was Kamalakar Das. Narahari Das of Srikhanda, one of the most noted followers and friends of Chaitanya, was the religious preceptor of Lochan Das. In the brief autobiographical account he gives of himself in his Chaitanya-Mangal and also in another work named Durlabha Sar, he writes :—

Lochan Das born 1523 A.D.

"On both my father's and mother's side I was the only male child. My maternal grand-father was without any male heir, and I had no brother. Whereever I happened to stay I was treated with great indulgence. In fact, I was was almost spoiled. None could succeed in giving me lessons. Thanks be to my maternal grandfather Purusottama Gupta, a man of high character who gave me sound thrashings and at last succeeded in teaching me the alphabet."*

Autobiographical notes.

Lochan Das's Chaitanya-Mangal has half the bulk of Vrindavan Das's Chaitanya-Bhagavata. It does not claim the authority of a reliable biography. The Vaisnavas love the work because Lochan was a fine poet; his work is more a creation of fancy than an historically accredited account of Chaitanya's life.

A good poem, though not a good biography.

* "মাতৃকুলে পিতৃকুলে আমি এক মাত্র।
সহোদর নাহিমোর মাতামহের পুত্র॥
যথা যাই তথাই দুর্লভ করে মোরে।
দুর্লভ দেখিয়া মোরে পড়াইতে নারে॥
ধন্য সে পুরুষোত্তম চরিত তাঁহার।
মারিয়া ধরিয়া মোরে শিখাল আখর॥"

Chaitanya-Mangal.

There are professional parties of singers who sing the whole of Chaitanya-Mangal and people delight in its high-flown poetry. I quote a passage below from this book. The author is describing a conversation of Chaitanya Deva with his wife Visnupriya on the eve of his turning Sannyasin. It is doubtful if the stoical character of Chaitanya is consistent with the feelings attributed to him in the passage but it does credit to our author as a piece of emotional poetry.

Visnupriya and Chaitanya.

*"Near Chaitanya's feet sat Visnupriya sighing deeply and looking at him with tearful eyes. She placed the dear feet of her lord on her breast and bound them in a loving embrace with her arms that were like gentle creepers. She wept till her *sari* was wet with her tears. Chaitanya awoke with a start and asked, 'Why should you be weeping beloved? Tell me the reason.' He fondly touched her chin with his right hand and with sweet words asked her again and again the cause of her sorrow. Visnupriya did

* "চরণ কমল পাশে, নিশ্বাস ছাড়িয়া বৈসে,
নেহারয়ে কাতর নয়নে।
হিয়ার উপরে থুইয়া, বাঁধে ভুজ লতা দিয়া
প্রিয় প্রাণনাথের চরণে॥
দুনয়নে বহে নীর, তিতিল হিয়ার চীর,
বুক বাহিয়া পড়ে ধার।
চেতনা পাইয়া চিতে, উঠে প্রভু আচম্বিতে,
বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া পুছে আর বার॥
মোর প্রাণ প্রিয়া তুমি, কাঁদ কি কারণে জানি,
কহ কহ ইহার উত্তর।
থুইয়া হিয়ার পরে, চিবুক দক্ষিণ করে
পুছে বাণী মধুর অক্ষর॥
কাঁদে দেবী বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া, শুনিতে বিদরে হিয়া,
পুছিতে না কহে কিছু বাণী।
পুনঃ পুনঃ পুছে প্রভু, সম্বরিতে নারে তবু,
কাঁদে মাত্র চরণ ধরিয়া॥

not reply, but continued weeping in a manner that would rend the heart to behold. Her mind was burning with anguish and her body lay inert while her eyes shed tears. She held his feet with her hands and silently wept in spite of the questions of her lord. Chaitanya, who knew the tender ways of love, wiped her eyes with the edge of his *dhuti* and began to speak kind and sweet words to her—words which would make even a stone to blossom, and which naturally appealed to an emotional nature. As Chaitanya Deva seemed so solicitious, Visnupriya with her face beautiful like the moon, said softly in a voice choked with tears, 'O Lord of my soul, place your dear hand on my head and say if it is true that you will become a Sannyasin. When I hear of it, my heart is likely to break for pain. I shall enter the fire, O my Lord, if the report is true. This my life, my youth, my dress, my ornaments—all I prize for your sake. If you forsake me why should I bear this wretched life! My heart burns as with a firy poison when I hear this report. Who is there,

অন্তরে দগধি প্রাণ দেহে নাহি সম্বিধান,
নয়নে ঝরয়ে মাত্র পানি।
প্রভু সর্ব্বকলা জানে, কহে বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া স্থানে,
অঙ্গবাসে বদন মুছিয়া॥
নানা রূপে কথা ভাব, কহিয়া বাড়ায় ভাব,
যে কথায় পাষাণ মুঞ্জরে।
প্রভুর ব্যগ্রতা দেখি, বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া চাঁদমুখী,
কহে কিছু গদ গদ স্বরে॥
শুন শুন প্রাণনাথ, মোর শিরে দেহ হাত,
সন্ন্যাস করিবে নাকি তুমি।
লোক মুখে শুনি ইহা, বিদরিয়া যায় হিয়া,
আগুনেতে প্রবেশিব আমি॥
তো লাগি জীবন ধন, এ রূপ যৌবন,
বেশ লীলা রস কলা।
তুমি যদি ছাড়ি যাবে, কি কাজে এছার জীবে,
হিয়া পোড়ে যেন বিষ জ্বালা॥

O Lord, so fortunate as I! I have a husband like you. I have cherished the dear hope that this youth of mine should be spent in your service. Ah, miserable am I now! The thing that pains me most is to think how you must travel on foot. Through the depth of the forest and along thorny paths, who will accompany you? Your beautiful feet are tender as the *Sirisha* flower which I fear to touch lest I should cause you pain; how will they traverse the hard ground, amongst the thorns of the forests and whither will you go, O Lord? For a slight exertion, your face, which is like the moon, perspires; how will you wander as a Sannyasin exposing yourself to the sun and the rain of the hot weather, both of which are quite unbearable? I do not prize

আমি হেন ভাগ্যবতী, নাহি হেন যুবতী,
তুমি হেন মোর প্রাণনাথ।
বড় আশা ছিল মনে, এ নব যৌবনে,
প্রাণনাথ দিব তোমা হাতে।
ধিক রঁহু মোর দেহে, এক নিবেদন তোঁহে,
কেমনে হাঁটিয়া যাবে পথে॥
গহন কণ্টক বনে, কোথা যাবে কার সনে,
কেবা তব যাবে সাথে সাথে।
শিরিষ কুসুম জেন, সুকোমল চরণ তেন,
পরশিতে মনে লাগে ভয়।
ভূমেতে দাঁড়াও যবে, প্রাণ মোর লয় তবে,
হেলিয়া পড়এ পাছে পাএ॥
অরণ্য কণ্টক বনে, কোথা যাবে কোন স্থানে,
কেমনে হাঁটিবে রাঙ্গা পাএ॥
সুখময় মুখ ইন্দু, তাহে ঘর্ম বিন্দু বিন্দু,
অল্প আয়াসে মাত্র দেখি॥
বরিষা বাদল ধারা, ক্ষণে জল ক্ষণে ঝরা,
সন্ন্যাস করণ বড় দুঃখী॥
তোমার চরণ বিনি, আর কিছু নাহি জানি,
আমারে কেলহ কার ঠাঁই।

anything above these dear feet; where will you leave me and in whose care? You will forsake home to be a Sannyasin; it is my wretched self that forms that chief bondage of your home, from which you wish to free yourself. No need, O Lord, to forsake home for me. For your least happiness, I would gladly put an end to my life with poison, so that you might stay at home and be happy there."

Further particulars about the poet.

Lochan Das died in 1589 at the age of sixtysix. Besides Chaitanya-Mangal he had written a Bengali work named Durlabhasar, and composed a number of very elegant songs. In the village of Kankda near Kogram (Lochan's native village) the MS. of Chaitanya-Mangal in the handwriting of Lochan Das is still preserved in the house of one Ram Krishna Chakravarti who is a professional singer of Chaitanya-Mangal.

(f) *Brief accounts of Vaisnava devotees*

There are numerous other works in which the incidents of Chaitanya Deva's life are described. It should be stated here that notices of Sanskrit books, such as Chaitanya-Chandrodaya by Kavi Karnapur, Karcha by Murari Gupta and other works dealing with the life of Chaitanya Deva do not fall within the scope of the present treatise.

Nityananda born 1473 A.D.

Besides Chaitanya Deva, but inseparably associated with him, were Nityananda and Advaitacharyya, two great recognised apostles of the Vaisnava faith of whom we have already spoken. Nityananda was born at Ekchaka in 1473 A.D. and Advaitacharyya was a grandson of Narasinha, the prime minister of Raja Ganesa.

কি কহিব মুঁই ছার, আমি তোমার সংসার,
সন্ন্যাস করিবে মোর তরে।
তোমার নিছনি লইয়া, মরি যাব বিষ খাইয়া,
সুখে তুমি বস এই ঘরে।"
Chaitanya-Mangal.

This Raja is said to have killed the Muhammadan emperor, and gained the throne of Gaur for himself by the counsel of his prime minister. Advaita's father, Kuvera Pandit was originally an inhabitant of Sylhet and had latterly settled at Santipur. Advaitacharyya was born in 1434, and lived to a hoary old age till 1557.

Advaitacharyya 1434-1557 A.D.

Accounts of Nityananda are to be found in almost all the biographical works of the Vaisnavas. His grandfather's name was Sundara Malla, his father's name Harai Ojha. This apostle had two wives—Vasudha and Jahnavi—two sisters; they were daughters of Suryya Das Sarkel, an inhabitant of Saligram near Ambikanagar in the district of Burdwan. The Vaisnava singers are never weary of singing songs in praise of Nityananda. In one which is very familiar, we have the following two lines which embody briefly the main traits of his character.

Particulars about Nityananda.

* "Without anger, without pride, and ever content,—he moves about the city."

The name of Advaitacharyya was Kamalakar Chakravarti—Advaitacharyya being his title, which indicates that he was a sound scholar in the Vedanta Philosophy. We find this line about him in the Karcha by Govinda Das :—

Biographies of Advaitacharyya.

† "—A very handsome person. His flowing hair and beard are grey with age. His long beard falls down to the breast."

Advaita married Sita Devi, a lady famous for her great piety. We have secured the following works on his life.

* "অক্রোধ পরমানন্দ নিত্যানন্দ রায়।
অভিমান শূন্য নিতাই নগরে বেড়ায়॥"
An old song.

† "পক্ক কেশ পক্ক দাড়ি বড় মোহনিয়া।
দাড়ি পড়িয়াছে তার জদয় ছাড়িয়া॥"
Karcha by Govinda Das.

(1) The early life of Advaitacharyya or the Balya Lila Sutra by Krisna Das of Loura in Sylhet. The author was a contemporary of Advaitacharyya.

(2) Advaita-Mangal by Syam Das. This work was written about a century after Advaitacharyya's death.

(3) Advaita-Prakas by Isan Nagar (born in 1492 A.D.). Prakas was completed by him in his seventieth year, in the year 1561. The book contains 5,400 lines.

(4) Advaita-Mangal by Hari Charan Das. This book was written immediately after the death of Advaitacharyya by the author, who was a disciple of the apostle. It is a voluminous book containing 23 chapters.

(5) Advaita-Vilas by Narahari Das. This work was written in the latter part of the 17th century.

The princely ascetics.

The line of princely ascetics has not yet been broken in India. Ages after the great Buddha had left his father's palace at Kapilavastu, Raja Gopichand of Bengal in the 12th century took the ascetic's bowl in hand and renounced his capital where his two beautiful queens Aduna and Paduna bemoaned their lot. Raja Gopichandra, a great prince and the handsomest young man of his age,—heeded not the enjoyments of life, but wandered through forests and dales exposing himself to unheard-of hardships, for the sake of religion. The situation involved a certain pathos the memory of which is still preserved in poems, to be found in all parts of India. When the monarch returned home still an ascetic after twelve years, the beggar's bowl still in his hand and unrecognised even by his devoted queens, they set on a bulldog to drive out one who appeared as an intruder into the palace, but the bulldog instantly recognised his old master, and falling at his feet began to wag his tail and lick them fondly; the royal elephant was sent to trample him under foot, but the elephant bent its head and moved his proboscies in fond joy at meeting the king. The

Gopichand.

queens now believed that it was Gopichand, the king, who had returned. All this we find in Manik Chandra Rajar *gan* about which we have written in an earlier chapter.

With the advent of Chaitanya Deva and under the noble example of his asceticism, princes and rich men came forward to undergo sacrifices for the sake of religion. All ranks of society came to realise the vanity of human wishes, the transitoriness of life and the glorious power of faith. We find many prominent instances of princely ascetics, among whom we may name Narottam Das, son and heir of Raja Krisna Chandra Datta of Srikheturi, who left his vast wealth and his palace, when only a lad of sixteen and walked on foot to Vrindavan. He lived there a life of piety and devotion which lights up the sky of the Vaisnava community immediately after the halo of Chaitanya Deva's personality has passed away from it. Narottam's life is described by Narahari Chakravarti, in his famous work Narottam-Vilas. Though only a Kayastha by birth, his influence was so great that many good Brahmins like Ganga Narayan Chakravarti became his willing disciples, and acknowledged him as their spiritual head. An interesting incident is described about him in the Narottam-Vilas. The Raja of Pakvapalli was approached by the orthodox Brahmin community with an application, that Narottam, the Prince of Kheturi, who had turned Sannyasin, was breaking caste by taking Brahmins as his disciples while he himself was a Sudra. They requested the Raja to inflict a severe punishment on Narottam for this impertinence. The Raja sent a message to Narottam, asking him how it was that a man of such piety as he was reputed to be, could violate the injunctions of the Sastras. Narottam sent a reply to the effect that there was nothing in the Sastras, rightly interpreted, to uphold or support the views of the Brahmins and that he was willing to hold a public discussion with those who entertained the contrary opinion. If his arguments failed and he was convinced of his error he would accept the orthodox view of matters and regulate his life accordingly. The Raja of Pakvapalli

Narottam Das.

marched with a host of scholars to meet Narottam, and in the meantime Ganganarayan Chakravarty, his disciple, and Ram Chandra "Kaviraj," his friend, contrived a device; one disguised himself as a potter, and the other as a seller of betels; they opened small shops on the road along which the Raja was to pass. His men came to purchase betels and pitchers from the shops and they spoke to them in Sanskrit. This amazed the servants and they carried word to the Raja that potters and betel-sellers spoke in Sanskrit in that part of the country. The news interested the Pandits, who immediately went to the spot, and being accosted in Sanskrit, were led into a controversial discussion in which the Raja's staff of Pandits, who had brought a cartful of MSS. to prove their point, were completely beaten. They afterwards came to know that one was a disciple and the other a friend of Narottam. Their arguments, however, produced so great an impression on the Raja and his scholars that they became disciples of Narottam then and there. Narottam, though belonging to the Kayastha caste, was called Thakur, a title generally applied in Bengal to Brahmins only.

Another princely ascetic of this age was Raghunath. Accounts of his life are to be found more or less in all the biographical works of the Vaisnavas. Raghunath Das was the only son of Govardhan Das of Satgaon and was born in 1498 A.D. His father's income from landed property amounted to 20 lakhs of rupees a year, out of which he had to pay 12 lakhs as revenue to the Muhammadan Government. The heir-apparent to a property yielding 8 lakhs of rupees a year in those days was no ordinary man, and Raghunath was naturally brought up in the midst of pomp and luxury, and in a style befitting his high rank. While he was yet a boy, Haridas, the veteran Vaisnava devotee and follower of Chaitanya, paid a visit to Satgaon and as young Raghunath saw the great saint, the vision of a higher life passed before him. The impression made on his mind was so great that he conceived an abhorrence for wealth and earthly

Raghunath Das, born 1498 A.D.

glory even at that early age. While in this state of mind a further change came over his spirit on meeting Chaitanya at Santipur—his eyes overflowing with tears of joy and a divine ecstasy moving his beautiful frame as he spoke of the love of God before thousands of men and women assembled there to hear him. Raghunath felt as if the portals of Heaven had been flung open to him and it was then that the world finally lost its charms for him. His parents were alarmed to find in the boy a growing tendency towards *Sannyasa* and found a very beautiful bride for him. Besides, they imposed great restrictions on his habits and movements; but nothing availed. Raghunath's mind was fixed on the feet of Chaitanya, and night and day he thought how best he could break the fetters that bound him to the world and join the great master. He studied religious books with great devotion and spent five years in a sort of spiritual agony which made him pale and emaciated,—it was the struggle of the bird in the cage that pants for the free air. By this time Chaitanya had again come to Santipur. People flocked from all parts of Bengal to have a sight of the great devotee who was already recognised in many circles as an incarnation of Visnu. Raghunath in deep distress threw himself at the feet of his parents and besought them with tearful eyes to grant him leave to see the god-like man. He said that he would die of grief if permission were witheld. They could not resist his pathetic appeal and with a strong escort sent him to Santipur. There the boy lay at the feet of Chaitanya, unable to utter a word, sighing and sobbing like a maiden in love. Chaitanya's attitude towards him was severe even to rudeness. He admonished the young man for his resolution to renounce the world prematurely. "Go back home," he said, "for you have duties to do where the Lord has placed you, and it would be a sin to avoid them; be not too much attached to the worldly life, but consider yourself as serving the will of the Lord, and if in course of time there comes to you a fitness to renounce the world by His grace, there will be no tension or strain in your efforts to attain that end. It will then be a perfectly natural

and easy matter, as when the fruit is ripe, it falls to the ground of itself."

Raghunath obeyed the great master and came back to his father's place. For a few years he lived like an ordinary man doing the duties of domestic life—pursuing his studies with zeal, apparently contented in spirit. But it was to him a course of preparation for final renunciation—for joining that great family of saintly men, who leaving the narrow environment of the domestic life had elected the good of the world to be their principal aim in life. When barely twenty, his mind was finally fixed, and he began to show a restless desire to leave home, which again caused great anxiety to his parents. Raghunath at this stage of his life slept in the outer courtyard, and could by no means be persuaded to visit his wife. Nityananda, the most revered of the Vaisnava devotees next to Chaitanya, paid a visit to Panihati at this time and thither Raghunath went to see him. After this meeting his restlessness and yearning increased tenfold.

His mother proposed to secure him, by binding him hand and foot with rope so that he might not move from the palace. Govardhan Das, his father, replied—"Great riches, a peerless wife and all the glories of the earth could not bind him, and do you think a rope can do so?—Such a suggestion is very foolish."* Yet the guards and sentinels kept watch over him. It was the story of Buddha over again. He made his escape one night and walked all the distance to Puri to meet Chaitanya. It took him 12 days to reach that place. The hardships of the journey were great, as he went barefooted, living on fruit and on the scanty food that chance brought him and resigning himself absolutely to the will of the Lord. Chaitanya saw in the face of the young Sannyasi that his renunciation was complete and embraced him in an ecstasy of joy.

* ইন্দ্রসম ঐশ্বর্য্য স্ত্রী অপ্সরা সম।
এ সব বাঁধিতে নারিল যার মন॥
দড়ির বাঁধনে তারে রাখিবা কিমতে। *

The hardships undergone by Raghunath while practising life-long asceticism have scarcely a parallel in history. He used to sleep 4 *dandas* (or a little more than an hour and a half) by day and night,—took a handful of refuse rice—the *mahaprasad* that used to be thrown away in the compound—only once a day and lived upon it. He wore rags and slept under the sky. His father occasionally sent large sums of money to his friends at Puri to minister to his comfort but he did not allow a single *cowri* to be spent on that account. This ascetic, whose whole life was one of austerities and holy contemplation, was cheerful and gay in spirit, and his piety was so great that though a Kayastha by birth he was reckoned as one of the six Gosvamis, whose words carry authority and precedence in the Vaisnava code compiled for the regulation of that community. The other five Gosvamis were, of course, Brahmins. He wrote 29 works in Sanskrit and composed many ballads besides—the theme of which was either Gauranga Deva or the love of Radha for Krisna.

Rupa and Sanatana.

Next may be mentioned Rupa and Sanatana, the two brothers who were ministers of the Court of Husain Shah. They were immensely rich, and possessed of great administrative powers, which were recognised by the emperor, who trusted them with important functions. But they felt the irresistible attraction of Chaitanya Deva's personality, and renounced the court and their homes with all their sweet bonds, took the vows of Sannyasins, and joined Chaitanya Deva. Rupa and Sanatana trace their descent from Bipra Ray, a Raja of Carnat. They were required by Chaitanya Deva to pass their lives in Vrindavan, conducting religious studies and practising the austerities of the religious life. We find descriptions of their great scholarship and piety and of the austerities they practised, incidentally in many biographical works of the Vaisnavas—chiefly in the first chapter of the Bhaktiratnakara by Narahari Chakravarty. They wrote in Sanskrit; so their works do not fall within the scope of our subject. The Sanskrit works written by Rupa, Sanatana and their nephew Jiva Gosvami form by far the best

portion of the Sanskrit literature belonging to the Bengali Vaisnavas.*

Sanatana was born in 1484 A.D. and died in 1558. Rupa was born in 1490 and died in 1563. Of the other great Vaisnava devotees Srinivas Acharyya, who was only a boy when Chaitanya Deva passed away, deserves prominent notice. He was a son of Gangadhara Chakravarti, an inhabitant of the village of Chakhandi on the Ganges. His mother Laksmi Priya came from Jajigram. In the early part of his life Srinivas was noted for his handsome appearance, for his great devotion and for his scholarship. It is said that Chaitanya Deva prophesied his advent. One incident in his life interests us greatly. We have already stated that Srinivas was placed in charge of the valuable MSS written by the great Vaisnava devotees who lived at Vrindavan, and which were sent to Bengal for circulation. We have also stated how the works were looted *en route* by the robber employed by Vira Hamvira, Raja of Vanavisnupur.

The loss of the precious MSS written through years of unremitting toil by the great Vaisnava worthies in Vrindavan, and of which no copy was left with the authors, filled Srinivas's mind with an overwhelming grief and well it might, for we have already related how the news of this loss proved fatal to old Krisna Das Kaviraj. A vigorous search was carried on throughout the whole night. But it gave him no clue whatsoever to trace the lost possessions. When the day dawned, pale and exhausted, Srinivas thought that before he left the place he should apply

* Sanatana wrote annotations on Haribhakti-Vilasa which he called 'The Dik Pradarsani.' His learned commentary on the tenth chapter of Srimat-Bhagavata is called 'The Vaisnava Tosini.' Besides this he wrote Bhagavatamrita in two parts, and a Sanskrit poem called Lilastava. Rupa Gosvami wrote (1) The Hansaduta, (2) Uddhava Sandesa, (3) Krisna Janmatithi, (4) Ganoddesa Dipika, (5) Stavamala, (6) Vidagdha Madhava, (7) Lalita Madhava, (8) Danakeli Kaumudi, (9) Ananda Mahodadhi, (10) Bhaktirasamrita Sindhu, (11) Ujjvala Nilamani, (12) Prayukta Khyata Chandrika, (13) Mathura Mahima, (14) Padyavali, (15) Laghu Bhagavatamrita, (16) Govinda Virudavali and other works. Jiva Gosvami is the author of Harinamamrita Vyakarana, Sutramalika, Krisnarcana Dipika, Gopal Virudavali, Madhava Mahotsava, Sankalpa Vriksa, Bhavartha Siksa Champu, and a good many other works on miscellaneous subjects. A full account of these is to be found in Bhaktiratnakara.

to Raja Vira Hamvira for help, since the robbery had been perpetrated in his dominions. This prince, as I have already said, had in his employment a set of robbers who carried on depredations secretly under his instructions and had done to the Vaisnavas what seemed to be an irreparable mischief. In the morning Srinivas asked for an interview and was immediately admitted into the Court. The Court Pandit was explaining the Bhagavata,—the great work of the Vaisnavas, to the Raja and his suite, when Srinivas entered the hall. He was attired in the yellow ropes of an ascetic, the sacred garland of *Tulasi* hung round his neck, and his handsome face, radiant with intelligence and spirituality, at once made an impression on the Raja and his people. They bowed down, knowing him to be a Brahmin and saint and asked him what made him seek an interview with the Raja. Srinivas replied, "As the Bhagavata is being read I shall not interrupt you. Only let the reading of the holy book be finished, and then I shall proceed to tell what I have to say." He kept standing in the hall patiently in the attitude of prayer and would not sit down while Bhagavata was being read; nor did he betray the emotion that troubled his soul while listening to the recitation of *slokas* with true devotion. His piety was to be seen on his face. When the reading was over, the Court Pandit Vyasacharyya said to him, "Revered sir, you seem to be a devout Vaisnava. If it is not disagreeable to you, will you kindly read and explain some passages from this text for our enlightenment?" He quietly responded to the call, and sitting in the midst of the assembly, made a short speech on the spirit of the Bhagavata. His mind was already full of sadness and with his sonorous voice ringing with feeling, he delivered his disquisition on the great work, showing a masterly grasp of the subject, and a power of oratory which seemed to them really wonderful. The whole Court was moved at the words which fell from his lips—his voice almost chocked with devotional sentiment; they wept and saw through their tears the saintly man who seemed as a god to them. Even Vira Hamvira,

though a notorious dacoit in the guise of a Raja, could not resist the tender appeal, and every one present, including the Court Pandit himself, fell at Srinivas's feet and asked to be made his disciple. The Raja and his people were thus converted to the Vaisnava faith on the spot and Srinivas was acknowledged their spiritual head. In the evening Srinivas sought the Raja again, and told him, with voice chocked with tears, that unless the Mss. looted within his territory, were recovered, he could not think of continuing to live; the works of the Gosvamis he held dearer than his own life; the blame of the great loss would be upon him, as he was in charge of the manuscripts, and this thought alone was sufficient to make his life miserable. The Raja was taken aback by this story. He fell at the feet of Srinivas and with tears of remorse, craved a thousand pardons, confesssing that he had himself been at the root of this great crime. He now had the Mss. brought from his treasury, and Srinivas was delighted to see them again. Alas for poor Krisna Das Kaviraj, he had died of a broken heart for a loss which was so soon to be repaired in so strange a manner! Raja Vira Hamvira, filled with remorse for his act, placed his whole property at the disposal of the Vaisnavas, and himself lived as a poor servant of the great masters. We have several beautiful songs in Bengali about Krisna and Radha, which were composed by the Raja and quoted by Narahari Das in his Bhaktiratnakara.

But we cannot say that Srinivas remained the same spiritual man after taking a Raja as his disciple. He married two wives, enjoyed the vast property presented to him by the Raja, and lived a life of comfort totally inconsistent with asceticism. In the Premavilas by Nityananda we find the following account of Srinivas. Manohar Das, a native of Vanavisnupur, was relating the incidents of Srinivas's life of Gopal Bhatta, one of the six great Vaisnava masters, and a follower of Chaitanya. Manohar Das said* :—"My native village is 24 miles from Visnupur. I live

* "বিষ্ণুপুর মোর ঘর হয় বার ক্রোশ।
রাজার রাজো বাস করি হইয়া সন্তোষ॥

within the jurisdiction of Raja Vira Hamvira. We are all happy under his rule. The Raja is a disciple and a true servant of Srinivas Acharyya. His courtiers are all good men. We have Vyasacharyya amongst them. Srinivas Acharyya lives in the town. The Raja has presented him with several villages and other properties. Acharyya Prabhu (Srinivas) married in April last." Manohar then went to say many things in praise of Srinivas. But Gopal Bhatta remained silent for sometime, and at last said again and again, "Oh, he is lost! Oh, he is lost!"

In the Vaisnava community there were still pious men whose lives were pure gold without any alloy of worldliness,—men who shunned filthy lucre and all the other attractions of the world, remaining true to God for evermore.

Some other Vaisnava devotees.

We shall here notice briefly some other Vaisnava devotees, whose lives are included in the biographical literature of the Vaisnavas.

Hari Das.

1. Hari Das—a Muhammadan. Because of his accepting the Vaisnava faith under Chaitanya Deva's influence he was carried by the orders of a Muhammadan Magistrate to 22 different public places in each of which he was mercilessly whipped till they thought he was dead. He did not disown his faith in spite of this persecution. Hari Das survived this fierce punishment and was not again molested but the wily Magistrate had recourse to a stratagem. Seated in a small hut Hari Das used to pray to God and recite His name for the whole night. A beautiful young woman dressed in the finest apparel was privately employed to tempt him. She called on him

আচার্য্যের সেবক রাজা বীর হাম্বির।
বাসাচার্য্যাদি অমাত্য পরম সুধীর॥
সেই গ্রামে আচার্য্য প্রভু বাস করিয়াছে।
গ্রাম ভূমি বৃত্তি আদি রাজা যা দিয়াছে॥
এইত ফাল্গুন মাসে বিবাহ করিলা।
অন্যান্য যোগাড়া তার যতেক কহিলা॥
মৌন হয়ে ভট্ট কিছু না বলিলা আর।
অলৎপাদ অলৎপাদ কহে বার বার॥ —Prema-vilas.

in the evening, when the devotee sat all alone, absorbed in prayer and said to him with smiles, that she desired to be his companion; having been attracted by his pious life, she felt a great admiration for him, and would be glad to be allowed the opportunity of talking with him for a while freely to her heart's content. The devotee said he would fulfil all she might want of him after saying his prayers. Then, for the whole night, he sat motionless as a statue, praying and chanting softly the name of God. Nor had the woman again the courage to speak or disturb the course of his devotion; and when the day dawned, and crowds of people assembled there, she had to depart. The next day she again sought an opportunity to lead the saint into conversation, and was again disappointed in the same way. But when the third day passed in the same way, the example of this great life and its living faith could not be resisted, and she had her head shaved, and became a Vaisnava convert, abandoning all her evil ways. Hari Das was born in Budhan in Rarh Desa and died at Puri in 1534 shortly after Chaitanya Deva had passed away.

Syamananda

2. Syamananda belonged to the Satgopa caste. His father was Krisna Mandal and his mother Durika. Syamananda is known by different names such as 'Krisna Das,' 'Dukhi' and 'Dukhini.' Many of the songs on Radha and Krisna, which he composed, appeared under the last of his names in the Padakalpataru and Padakalpalatika. Syamananda's worthy disciple Rasik Murari carried the work of propagating the Vaisnava faith to Orissa, and full description of the manner in which this work was conducted, will be found in a work called Rasik-Mangal by Gopi Vallabh Das. The Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and other chiefs of Orissa, who profess the Vaisnava faith, acknowledge the descendants of Rasik Murari as their spiritual directors.

Gadadhara, Uddharan Datta and others.

Accounts of the lives of (1) Gadadhara (1486—1514 A.D.), son of Madhava Misra, (2) of Uddharan Datta born in 1481 A.D., (3) of Lokanath Das Gosvami and (4) of Gopal Bhatta, one of the six Vaisnava

Gosvamis, son of Benkata Bhatta, are to be found amongst others in many of these biographical works.

We here give a short note on several important works of biography written by the Vaisnavas in the latter part of the 16th and in the earlier part of the 17th century.

Bhaktiratnakara.

By far the greatest of the biographical works, next to that of Chaitanya's life by Krisna Das Kaviraj, is the Bhaktiratnakara of Narahari Chakravarty. He was a disciple of the celebrated Visva Nath Chakravarty, whose commentary on the Bhagavata is authoritative amongst Vaisnavas in the interpretation of their sacred scriptures. Bhaktiratnakara is one of the most voluminous works that we have in old Bengali literature. It is divided into 15 chapters. I give here an index of its contents.

An index of contents

Chap. I.—An account of the ancestors of Jiva Gosvami; a description of the works written by the great Vaisnava masters; an account of Srinivas Acharyya.

Chap. II.—An account of Chaitanya Das, father of Srinivas.

Chaps. III and IV.—Accounts of the travels of Srinivas to Puri and to Vrindavan.

Chap. V.—On rhetoric interpreted in the light of Vaisnava Theology.

Chap. VI.—Incidents from the lives of Narottam, Srinivas, Raghava Pandit, while they resided at Vrindavan; accounts of Srinivas's being put in charge of the Mss. of the works written by the Vaisnava masters, and despatched to Bengal.

Chap. VII.—The looting of the Mss. by dacoits employed by Vira Hamvira, Raja of Vanavisnupur and conversion of the Raja to the Vaisnava faith.

Chap. VIII.—An account of Rama Chandra Kaviraj and his initiation as a disciple of Srinivas.

Chap. IX.—An account of the great Vaisnava festivals held at Kanchagadia and Srikheturi.

Chaps. X and XI.—An account of Jahnavi Devi, wife of Nityananda and her pilgrimages.

Chap. XII.—An account of Srinivas marrying a second time.

Chaps. XIII and XIV.—Description of religious festivities at Verakuli.

Chap. XV.—Propagation of the Vaisnava faith by Syamananda in Orissa.

Narottam-vilas

Narahari Chakravarty's second book called Narottam-vilas (life of Narottam), though comparatively small in size shows a decided improvement on the Bhaktiratnakara both in style and in its arrangement of materials. Narottam-vilas is divided into 12 chapters.

Narahari was a great scholar in Sanskrit, and the above two works, though written in Bengali, are full of learned references and quotations from Sanskrit. In the Bhaktiratnakara we find references to the following amongst other Sanskrit works—Varaha Purana, Padma Purana, Adi Purana, Brahmanda Purana, Skanda Purana, Saura Purana, Srimat Bhagavata, Laghu Tosini, Govindavali, Gauraganoddesa Dipika, Sadhana Dipika, Nava Padma, Gopala Champu, Laghu Bhagavata, Chaitanya Chandrodaya Nataka, Vrajavilasa, Bhatti Kavya, Bhaktiratnamrita-Sindhu, Krisna Charita by Murari Gupta, Ujjvala Nilamani, Govarddhana-Haribhakti-vilasa, Stavamala, Sangita-Madhava, Vaisnavatosini, Syamananda Sataka, Mathura Khanda.

Prema-vilas

Prema-vilas by Nityananda Das. This is also a voluminous work divided into 20 cantos. It was written during the early part of the 17th century. Nityananda's father Atmaram Das belonged to a Vaidya family of Srikhanda. The work under notice mainly treats of the lives of Srinivas and Syamananda.

Karnamrita

Karnamrita by Jadunandana Das. The author was a disciple of Srimati Hemalata Devi, a daughter of Srinivas. Karnamrita gives a full account of Srinivas Acharyya's life together with a short account of the lives of his disciples. The work was written in 1607 A.D.

Vansi-siksa by Purusottam Siddhanta Vagisa. This book while giving an account of Chaitanya's renunciation, mainly deals with the life of Vansi Das Thakura, one of the Chaitanya's companions. It was written in 1716 A.D.

Vansi-siksa.

Rasik-Mangal or the Life of Rasikananda by Gopi Vallabh Das. Rasikananda was the son of Raja Achyutananda and was born in 1519 A.D. He was one of the greatest disciples of Syamananda and took a zealous interest in the propagation of the Vaisnava cult in Orissa. The author was a contemporary of the subject of his memoir. This work is important, as it throws light on the history of Orissa of that period. It describes how Raja Vaidyanath Bhanja (of Mayurbhanja) was converted to the Vaisnava faith and also gives an account of the great Vaisnava festivals that took place in the villages of Verakuli and Alamaganja in the district of Midnapur.

Rasik-Mangal.

Mana-santosini by Jagajivana Misra. The author was a descendant, by another line, of Upendra Misra, an ancestor of Chaitanya Deva. The work gives a description of Chaitanya's travels in Sylhet and other parts of Eastern Bengal.

Mana-santosini.

Besides these works we have come across a Chaitanya Charita by Churamani Das, Nimai Sanyasa by Sankara Bhatta, Sita Charita by Lokanath Das, Mahaprasada Vaibhava, Chaitanya-Ganoddesa, Vaisnavachara Darpana and other works which describe incidents in the lives of Vaisnava worthies.

And other works.

We shall here briefly notice some of the works which are of a more or less theological character, in which the principles of Vaisnavism are explained as it found favour in Bengal. We have already mentioned a number of books written by the Sahajiya Vaisnavas. I give below a list of other works on Vaisnava theology. Most of the important theological works of the Vaisnavas are written

Theological works of the Vaisnavas.

in Sanskrit. So they do not fall within the scope of my subject. The books mentioned below, written in Bengali, are generally small treatises and their composition covers a period of 300 years from after the time of Chaitanya Deva till the middle of the 18th century.

1. Bhaktirasatmika by Akinchan Das.
2. Gopibhaktirasa-Gita by Achyut Das. The book contains 2,100 couplets.
3. Rasa-Sudharnava by Ananda Das.
4. Atamatattva-Jijnasa.
5. Pasanda-Dalana.
6. Chamatkara Chandrika.
7. Gurutattva.
8. Prema Bhaktisara by Gaur Das Vasu.
9. Golok-varnana by Gopal Bhatta.
10. Harinama Kavacha by Gopi Krisna. It contains 158 couplets.
11. Siddhisara by Gopinath Das (18 couplets).
12. Nigama-Grantha by Govinda Das.
13. Premabhakti Chandrika by Narottam Das. The writer is one of the great Vaisnava masters about whom we have already written in some detail. The work under notice, though small in size, enjoys a great popularity with the Vaisnavas and is permeated by a devotional spirit.
14. Ragmayi Kana by Nityananda Das.
15. Upasana Patala by Prema Das.
16. Manasiksa by Premananda.
17. Astottara-Satanama by Dvija Hari Das.
18. Vaisnavabhidhana by Balarama Das.
19. Hata Vandana by Balaram Das.
20. Premavilas by Yugal Kisor Das.
21. Rasakalpa Tattvasara by Radha Mohan Das.
22. Chaitanya Tattvasara by Ram Gopal Das.
23. Siddhanta-Chandrika by Ram Chandra Das.

24. Smarana-Darpana by Ram Chandra Das.
25. Kriya-yogasara by Anantaram Datta. The author was born at Sahapur on the Meghna. His father's name was Raghunath Datta. The book contains 4,000 couplets.
26. Kriyayogasara by Ramesvar Das.
27. Chaitanya-Premavilas (100 couplets).
28. Durlabhasara (950 couplets).
29. Dehanirupana (100 couplets).
30. Anadalatika (100 couplets).

(27–30) By Lochan Das, born in 1523 A.D.

31. Bhaktichintamani
32. Bhaktimahatmya
33. Bhaktilaksmana
34. Bhaktisadhana

(31–34) By Vrindavan Das.

35. Vrindavan-Lilamrita
36. Rasapuspa Kalika

(35–36) By Nanda Kisor Das.

37. Prema Davanala by Narasinha Das.
38. Gokula Mangal by Bhaktirama Das.
39. Radha-Vilas by Bhavani Das.
40. Ekadasi-Mahatmya by Mahidhara Das.
41. Krisna-Lilamrita by Balaram Das.

V. The Padas or Songs of the Vaisnavas

The lyrics of the Vaisnava poets, known as Padas, form by far the most important and most interesting page in the history of Vaisnava literature.

These Padas are divided into several groups. They all relate events and incidents in the life of Krisna in Vrindavan. The pastoral scenes, and gatherings of shepherd-boys, the playful ways of Krisna in his home—the manner in which he baffled king Kansa's attempt to kill him, by destroying his great demons, who were one by one deputed to kill him,—his love for Radha, the princess, and his final departure from Vrindavan and arrival at Mathura, where he overthrows and kills Kansa—have all been fully

The subject of the Padas.

described in the Bhagavata, to which we have already referred on page 220. A short account of Krisna's life at Vrindavan and Mathura will enable our readers to enter into the spirit of the songs of the Vaisnava poets

Kansa, King of Mathura.

Kansa, King of Mathura, had achieved notoriety by oppressing his people. It was then vouchsafed by Visnu to the goddess of Earth, who groaned under the king's oppressions, that He would Himself be incarnated in the flesh as a son of Daivaki, sister of Kansa, with the object of destroying the ruthless monarch, who with his emissaries was devastating the earth. The message of the coming divine incarnation spread throughout heaven and caused great joy amongst the gods, so that Kansa also heard of it. For Narada, the heavenly sage, came to him and said that the eighth child of Daivaki, his sister, would be that incarnation of Visnu, whose first mission would be to kill him and then destroy other oppressors of the world.

The prophecy alarmed Kansa who immediately put Daivaki and her husband Vasudeva in prison and ordered that all children born to her should be killed; for his ministers advised him that the prophecy of Narada was ambiguous in its meaning as it was not clear what was meant by the eighth child;—supposing that Daivaki should have twelve children, then counting from the last, the fourth according to ordinary calculation would be the eighth. As the question of the king's life or death hung on the correct solution, nothing ought to be left dubious and all the children of Daivaki should unsparingly be killed, thus completely removing all chance of danger. One by one seven children were born to poor Daivaki in prison and they were all killed by Kansa.

Visnu as the eighth child.

Ultimately Visnu came as the eighth child. He was born in the middle of the eighth night of the waning moon and as Vasudeva looked upon him, he saw the baby surrounded by a halo of light and possessed of other signs from which he knew him to be no other than Visnu himself; he was naturally eager to save

the divine child from the hands of the oppressor, and marched with him to the gates of the prison. The gate-keepers, at his approach, fell into a deep sleep, and the gates which were under strong lock and key, softly opened of themselves making a passage for the child. The anxious father came to the Jumna whose dark waters rolled before him, with their foaming waves, and the night was so dark that he despaired of crossing it. But at this moment a jackal passed through the waters, showing that here there was a ford across the river and Vasudeva followed the steps of the jackal, and found land again under his feet. He crossed the Jumna and meanwhile the thousand-headed snake, Vasuki, raised his hoods aloft and protected the father and the child. Vasudeva went to Vrindavan where, according to the prophecy he had heard that night, a child was born to Nanda Ghosh, the prince of the Gopas or milkmen, who inhabited the district. In obedience to the prophecy he passed into the birthroom, the doors having yielded to his touch, placed his baby by the side of the sleeping Yasoda, queen of Nanda Ghosh, and taking her baby with him, returned to the prison. In the morning Kansa heard of the birth of Daivaki's eighth child and found to his surprise that it was a girl. He, however, took the little thing into his hands and tried to dash its brains out against the stones. But this baby was an incarnation of the goddess Bhagavati. Just as he was throwing her against the stones she slipped from his hand and assuming her own appearance as a goddess rose to the sky, saying: 'One who will kill you is growing up in Vrindavan.' The goddess disappeared and Kansa had no sleep by day and night. He constantly thought who this child might be, till he saw apparitions of his destroyer even in trees and walls, and sent emissaries throughout the land to kill every little child that was born. The groan of mothers rose to the sky; the earth trembled to her centre and black winds began to blow all over the country.

Kansa kills every new born child.

Then some one said to him that little Krisna, his future destroyer, was growing up in the house of Nanda Ghosh, prince of Vrindavan and he sent Putana, the demon-nurse, to kill the child. Putana was killed, and then, as I have said in a previous chapter in my remarks on the Bhagavata, one by one Kansa's emissaries, Trinavarta, Baka, Kesi and others were killed in the course of similar missions and the King's anxiety grew in an alarming degree. Last of all he sent Akrura, a devout Vaisnava, who would know whether it was indeed Visnu who was incarnated as Krisna, ordering him to bring Krisna to attend the Dhanuryajna or bow-sacrifice that he was holding at Mathura. Nanda Ghosh, a feudatory chieftain under Kansa, could not disobey his command. And Krisna and Balarama, his cousin, were taken to Mathura, where the former killed Kansa in the open court.

Krisna kills the King's emissaries.

Akrura.

Kansa is killed.

This is briefly the story of the Bhagavata; but the Vaisnava poets do not lay any stress on such manifestations of the glory or *aisvarya* (ঐশ্বর্য) of Krisna. They scarcely touch on any of the points, here mentioned, in their accounts of Krisna.

Vaisnava poets not interested in the above.

They describe his games and pastimes at home where his mother Yasoda, while punishing him for misconduct, weeps for remorse. She would not allow him to go to the fields with other boys to graze the cattle for fear of Kansa's emissaries; and every morning the shepherds would come to her and beg her to send Krisna with them for the day. The *Gostha* or songs of the pastoral sports detail how Yasoda at first refuses the shepherds but at last yields to their entreaties coupled with Krisna's own request to be allowed to go to the meadow;—how the shepherd boys blow their horns and the cows follow them with frolicsome leaps;—how Krisna plucks flowers and fruits and distributes them amongst the boys and how they play together, sometimes mimicking the cries of

The *Gostha*.

birds,—dancing with peacocks,—trying to skip over their own shadows and sometimes pursuing monkeys through the boughs of trees; at such a moment appears Trinavarta or some other demon while Krisna leaves his comrades, and though only a boy, manifests himself in all his glory, and then destroying the demon rejoins his companions in triumph. So the boys, forsaken by Krisna, feel that they are helpless. They know him to be their friend and playmate but he is also a mystery to them. They cannot realise his greatness but his personality is dearer to them than life. In many dangers it is he who protects them in a way unintelligible to them. The lake Kaliya was poisoned by the great snake Kali; some of the shepherds go there, drink the water and die by poison; Krisna is informed of it; he comes swiftly to the lake, restores the children to life and enters the lake himself; disappearing in its waters, he wrestles with the great snake for a long time and in the meantime the shepherd-boys having lost Krisna, the friend of their souls, stand statue-like on the bank of the lake with tearful eyes. Who will now kill Kansa's emissaries for them? Who will now protect them from Indra, the God of clouds, who has already tried to destroy the Vrinda groves by sending floods? Who will protect the cattle when a demon like Baka comes down to devour them? The apple of their eyes, their protector, play-fellow and constant companion, their friend and philosopher, their ever-beloved Krisna has now disappeared in the waters of the poisonous lake Kaliya, and they cry out in song:

The lake Kaliya.

*"O, let us all go, let us go to mother Yasoda, and tell her—O mother, the jewel of your heart is lost by us in the waters of Kaliya. The moon of the Vrinda groves has set on yonder

* "চল চল সবে চল, আমরা বলিগে মায়েরে গিয়ে।
তোর অঞ্চলের মণি, শুনগো জননী,
এলেম ভাসায়ে দিয়ে।

lake! The Vrinda groves are now void and all the world is void to us and what is now left that we should care to live for!"

At this juncture comes Radha like a mad woman stricken with fear,—with her hair dishevelled; she goes to throw herself into the waters of Kaliya,—when lo! the great serpent Kaliya raises its hood aloft,—two mermaids on two sides singing the praises of Krisna and on the hood of the serpent, from which a rich diamond sparkles like the sun, stands Krisna playing on his flute. The picture of this scene which is called *Kaliya damana*, is to be found in all the artists' shops in Bengal. The boys are as if restored to life by the sight. All these incidents are the subject of song in the *gostha*; and the Vaisnava *padas* describing these pastoral scenes tenderly appeal to the heart and claim a tribute of tears from their readers.

The *Deva Gostha*

Then comes the *Deva Gostha*. Here the boys describe a superb scene that they have witnessed in the Vrinda groves,—while they come as usual in the morning to solicit Yasoda's permission to take her dear son to the woods. They say, "O mother, believe not your Krisna to be a common child. We cannot conceive of his greatness. He is our comrade and friend, but he is no ordinary mortal. Resplendent beings, with halo of light round their heads, appear in the forest. O mother, we never knew that such beings lived in Vrindavan. A woman of superhuman beauty comes riding on a lion to the forest every day and taking our Krisna in her arms gives him sweet cream and butter to eat. But Krisna distributes those amongst us! They are so sweet, so sweet! O mother, though you are a queen, you have nothing so delicious!" Thus the boys unconsciously indicate

A superb sight.

The gods and goddesses come down to pay honour to Krisna.

ব্রজকুলশশী অস্ত হ'ল এত দিনে, ভুবন শূন্য হ'ল।
মোদের ফুরাইল আশা, নাহিক ভরসা
আমরা থাকিব কি ধন লয়ে॥"

that the Goddess Bhagavati comes amongst them to meet Visnu who is incarnated as Krisna. They continue, "Then comes, O mother, a host of other beings. We know them not. Never in Vrinda groves, have we seen such men! One of them rides on a buffalo (Yama, king of Death), another a peacock (the warrior-god Karttikeya) and a third, resplendent with a crown from which diamonds shoot forth their light like suns, comes riding on a huge white elephant (Indra riding on the elephant Airavata) and then comes another being with four faces, radiant as fire, counting the beads of his rosary (Brahma, the Creator). They all come to our Krisna and if he looks at them with kindliness, they feel as if they are blessed, their eyes become tearful with joy; they dare not approach him too closely, they hold him in so great a reverence. But last comes a beggar riding on a bull. He puts on a tattered tiger's skin and from his matted locks flows a stream. He is covered with dust and serpents hiss from his head. As he sees Krisna he dances for joy and Krisna becomes all impatience to meet him. He clasps the beggar in his arms and locks him in a close embrace saying, 'O Lord, you are immaculate, unapproachably pure and a true *Yogi*. I gave you the golden palace of Kailasa and apppointed Kuvera, the god of wealth as your store-keeper; but you live in funeral grounds on scanty food, and have not been moved from the stern ascetic life. You are above all the gods,—O Lord, O Lord, I worship you.' Saying this our Krisna falls at his feet. But the beggar washes his feet with the water that flows from his matted locks and says again and again, 'I am blessed, I am blessed.' This refers to an interview of Krisna with Siva. The waters from his locks are the holy streams of the Ganges.

The spiritual significance of the *padas*.

These songs all possess a deep spiritual significance. Through the legends of gods and goddesses they touch the finer chords of our emotions, and teach that wealth, fame and worldly ties are as nothing when God calls us to Him. The devotion of the shepherds of the Vrinda groves to Krisna has no grain of earthliness in it.

Beyond the pale of palaces, of the world's splendour and luxury, the Vrinda groves are situated under a clear sky, and the simple-minded shepherds, by dint of their sincere devotion alone, acquire the spirit of resignation to him which theologists and monastic pedants, with all their learning, cannot realise.

The *Uttara-Gostha* or "return home."

Then comes the *Uttara-Gostha* or return home of the shepherds. The mother is anxious. The shades of evening cover the Vrinda groves;—the last ray of light disappears from the western horizon and the poor Yasoda is restless. She goes into her apartments to learn the time and comes out looking wistfully towards the woods. Afraid of Kansa's emissaries or of other accidents befalling her beloved Krisna, she describes to her companion and relative Rohini her anxious fears. She knows that her voice will not be heard, yet calls aloud 'Krisna, Krisna, Krisna'; and when her anguish is at its deepest, lo! the horn sounds, or the lowing of the cows is heard, and she runs out to meet her son. Krisna, with sportive steps amongst his gay companions with the crown of peacock feathers bent a little to the left and the garland of forest flowers hanging round his neck,—his face marked with beautiful *alaka* and *tilaka*,—comes running to the embrace of his doting mother. This is the *Uttara-Gostha*.

Padas on Krisna's amours with Radha.

But these incidents also, comparatively speaking, form a very minor portion of the literature of the *padas*, the greater part of them being devoted to Krisna's amours with Radha.

Radha is the daughter of the king Vrisa Bhanu. When she was born she did not open her eyes, and people thought she was blind. Amongst others Krisna as a boy went to see the new-born child. But when he stood beside her, she opened her eyes, so that before seeing anything of the world she might see him—the lord of the universe, unto whom she was pledged in love from birth. In due time she was married to Ayana Ghosh.

Visakha, one of her maids, now showed her a picture of Krisna. The moment she saw it, she felt a strange emotion, she

First love

yearned to see him in the flesh. There under the shade of a *Kadamba* tree with the crown made of peacock feathers bent a little to the left, and adorned with the flowers of the forest, stood the young shepherd-god, flute in hand; the flute sang 'Radha, Radha,' and on the moment she fell in love. Her maids did not know what had wakened in her heart. She would go and come out of her room a hundred times in an hour without cause, look wistfully towards the *Kadamba* tree, and sigh deeply. Sometimes she would quietly sit like a statue and rise suddenly with a start. Her garments hung loosely on her, her necklace fell to the ground, she cared not for it. The maids thought she was possessed by ghosts. One evening she softly related to them her story. It was as if the dark blue sky had taken a human shape,—the rainbow on the top had assumed the beauty of the crown of peacock's feathers and the woods and forests had given their floral tribute to adorn his person. His flute called constantly 'Radha, Radha,' and she could not control herself. She took little food or fasted altogether and looked like a *Yogini* with her yellow cloth, and fixed her gaze on the clouds, with which she held communion with uplifted hands.

The emotions of Krisna were no less fervent. The spikes of the *Champaka* flowers, drenched with the rain, blossomed and he was reminded of Radha at the sight. He could not look towards Vrisa Bhanu's palace for his tears; day and night he took his flute in his hand and sang 'Radha, Radha.'

The meeting

Then comes the meeting. She stealthily walks along the forest-path to meet him. A dark-coloured *sadi* hides her in the dark night; like a creeper with fine foliage and gay flowers or like a streak of lightning formed in human shape she goes—caring not for caste—fearing not the slanderous tongues of the wicked or the reprimands of her elderly relations,—offering herself, body and soul, to his service. She comes to him as a martyr for love, and joins him in the bowers of the Vrinda groves; and from that time forward every night the maids prepare a bower of flowers and there Krisna

and Radha meet. There are many manœuvres and devices adopted by the lovers for these meetings and the scandal has by this time spread. Radha said she would mind no consequence. If the world will not look at her face, well and good. She will repeat the name of Krisna day and night and the joy derived from that would make up for all her sufferings. 'Take my bracelets away, O maids, the service of Krisna will adorn my hands and I want no other ornaments for them;—take away my necklace of purest pearls, the thought of Krisna is the ornament of my breast; I want no other for it; the praise of Krisna will adorn my ears, no need of ear-rings for them. The ground trodden by Krisna's feet is dear to me; cover my body, O maidens, with the sacred dust of that ground! Oh! I shall turn a Yogini for love. My infamy is known,—you fear it, but I glory in it; I glory in all that the love of Krisna may bring to me!'

We have already spoken of how Krisna goes in the disguise of a physician knowing Radha to be ill and on the pretext of feeling her pulse touches her hand, and is overjoyed. He sees her in the guise of a holy nun, and blesses her before all present, while with side-long glances conveys to her secretly his deep love. Many similar devices are described. One day Subala, one of the friends and companions of Krisna, dressed as a girl, went to Radha privately and told her that Krisna was reminded of her at the sight of a *champaka* flower and it being day time he was not able to see her, and a fit of unconsciousness had come over him. On hearing this she immediately exchanged clothes with Subala and looking like a pretty shepherd-boy, with the shepherd's crook in her hand, went to the pastoral grove leaving Subala in the house, disguised as a girl. There she saw Krisna lying on the earth unconscious and took him in her arms. At her touch his senses came back to him; but without looking at her he said, "O Subala, tell me where is my Radha, the soul of my soul?" Radha said, "Look at me, I am your devoted servant. You do not recognise me!" and Krisna in raptures held her to his breast.

The story of the pearl-plant.

But Radha is a princess. Occasionally an idea of her own position in contrast with that of a village-shepherd is not unnatural in her. One day the shepherds thought, if the cows were adorned with necklaces of pearls, how grand they would look! They applied to Krisna who sent Sudama, a fellow-shepherd, to Radha, asking her for a pearl. One pearl would be enough, he said. He would sow it in the ground and by his power create pearl-plants. The princess sat in the company of her maidens, and told Sudama in reply—"Foolish shepherd, know that pearls grow in sea-shells and they are precious things. They are not like the forest-flowers that you pluck every day in the Vrinda-groves. The idea is worthy only of a shepherd. You want to adorn cows with necklaces of pearls; no monarch could be so lavish as to entertain such a wild fancy. Go back to your Krisna and say that the dew of heaven falls into the sea-shells under the influence of the constellation Svati, a rare happening, and is formed into pearls, and that fishers risk their lives to bring them from the bottom of the sea. It is not as easy to get a pearl as to possess a *kadamba* or a *champaka* flower." The maids also jeered at Sudama who stood silent, much mortified at being ridiculed in this manner. The crown of flowers fell from his head, his crook fell from his hand; insulted and disappointed he returned to Krisna and related the story of the treatment he had received from Radha and her maids. Krisna heard it; a sense of shame suffused his face, and he was pensive for some time; then he said, "Very well, my friends, I shall obtain a pearl by some means or other. Please wait here a moment for me." He ran to his mother and begged for a pearl. Yasoda said, "Foolish boy, what would you do with a pearl?" But Krisna would not leave her without one. He was refused and with tears in his eyes was about to return, when Yasoda's heart melted in affection:—"After all a pearl is of no value compared with my Krisna. I cannot see him sad." She called him

to her and from her ear-ring gave the brightest pearl that she had.

Forthwith he ran to his companions and sowed the pearl. Lo, the plants grew and in a few moments they were rich with their precious burden. The bank of the Jumna—its groves and bowers—all looked as if they were set on fire,—the pearls reflecting the light of the sun. The shepherds plucked them as fast as they could, made necklaces of them, put them round their own necks in profusion and hung them on the cows. In the meantime a maid of Radha had come to the Jumna to fetch water, when her eyes were dazzled by the wonderful scene. She hid himself behind a tree, and stealthily saw all that the shepherds did with the pearls. She hastened home and reported the matter to Radha, who now felt remorse for her conduct. She sent one of her maids to sound Krisna as to how he would treat her. But the shepherds sent her away with rough words. Radha herself hastened in the evening to the spot: but the pearl-groves had disappeared and she saw a strange city looking like a second heaven on the banks of the Jumna. There were celestial maidens with golden rods in hand guarding the gate of the city, and each maiden was as beautiful as herself and decorated with jewels and ornaments such as no earthly princess wore. She asked one of them if she knew where her Krisna was. The damsel replied in contempt,—"What! You want Krisna! You could never reach his palace, it is the highest in heaven. You will pass many a city like this before you reach his palace; but the guards will not allow you to enter." And poor Radha in deep anguish of heart passed on from place to place,—all displaying wonderful wealth, their spires and domes resplendent with diamonds, and reaching up to the starry regions,—heavenly damsels of beauty superior to any she could claim, rudely preventing her passage, and when she asked about Krisna, saying, "How foolish for a mad woman to think of reaching the highest heaven, the Vaikuntha of Krisna!" There in the starry night when the dews were falling and the *champaka* was diffusing its

fragrance,—the soft murmurs of the Jumna were heard from a distance,—in that dark night illuminated by the diamonds on the walls of the palaces and the stars of the sky, the unfortunate wanderer moved from gate to gate with pale face crying 'O Krisna!', and as the gate-keepers treated her with contempt and even rudeness,—her eyes became full of tears and she suddenly fell on her knees and with clasped palms prayed,—'O Lord of my Soul, O Lord of the Universe, O Krisna, I am a poor woman, foolish to the extreme and full of frailties and sins. Pardon me, O Lord, pardon me. I cannot live without thee. I die here.' And she drooped low even as a flower droops when the rains fall upon it, and in deep resignation she sat closing her eyes dazzled with the glories before her. 'How weak am I! How poor and cursed!', she cried. 'But forsake me not, O Lord of the Universe, I am but a poor and ignorant milk-maid,' and when she opened her eyes, the palaces had all gone and she saw her own Krisna,—the shepherd-boy standing before her, flute in hand, and taking her gently by the arm, saying, "Radha, my soul, the joy of my life, where have you been so long?" and she clasped his feet with her hands and for her choked voice could not say where she had been. God does not come to the proud but yields to love. This is the meaning to be found in this story.*

There are innumerable songs describing similar incidents in this love-story. The last is the Mathur, the most pathetic of all. Kansa sends Akrura to Vrinda-groves to bring Krisna. A chariot comes to take him. The shepherds stand speechless, statue-like and with choked voices, they cannot even say, 'don't go.' Yasoda lies unconscious in her frantic agony of heart. Nanda hides his eyes and groans in a corner of his palace, and the milk-maids with Radha at their head go to throw themselves under the wheels of the chariot to destroy their miserable lives;

The Mathur or parting.

* This story is related in the Bengali poem Muktalatavali written about 156 years Ago.

for unbearable will their life in Vrindavan be when Krisna has gone away. The birds Suka and Sari sit mute, not singing their accustomed merry tunes. The cows look wistfully towards the far bank of the Jumna where Mathura is situated. The bees no longer hum round the blooming flowers. All the groves of Vrinda look like a picture of desolation where the shepherds and the maid remain plunged in sorrow after the chariot has moved away. Krisna kills Kansa and is restored to Vasudeva and Daivaki, but poor Nanda and Yasoda are blinded with weeping.

Vrindavan deserted by Krisna.

Radha with her maids seek the Vrinda groves; it is a mad and fruitless search; she asks the jessamine, the lotus and the *kunda* flower if they can tell her the whereabouts of Krisna; she stands lost in a trance, and then runs on again—the thorns pierce her feet, she does not care; the maids say, 'do not run in that way, the thorns will pierce your feet, the snakes may bite; the place abounds with them.' Radha says, 'when I fell in love with a shepherd, I know I would have to wander through forests full of thorns. So I brought thorns from the woods and placing them in my courtyard, I learnt to walk on them. I guarded myself against snakes by learning charms with the same object; so I fear them not.' She comes to the pleasant bowers—there her senses leave her completely. Her gaze is transfixed to the clouds overtopped with a rainbow; she mistakes them for Krisna and addresses them* "O go not away! Wait but for a moment, thou, friend of my soul, leave me not thus. One should not forsake her who cannot live without him. If you stay not

Radha forsaken by Krisna.

* ওহে ত্রিলোক দাঁড়াও দাঁড়াও হে,
অমন করে যাওয়া উচিত নয়॥
যে যার শরণ লয়, নিঠুর বঁধু, তাকে কি বধিতে হয় হে।
হেথা থাকতে যদি মন না থাকে, তবে যেও সেথাকে,
যদি মনে মন রত, না হয় মনের মত,
কাঁদলে প্রেম আর কত বেড়ে থাকে।
তাতে যদি মোদের জীবন না থাকে,

here, go wherever you will; but wait only one moment. If you are resolved to go away, tears cannot check you, I know, and tears cannot produce love. If my life goes out for this, let it go. Who can avoid fate! Alas, dear friend, who can detain the unwilling heart by mere importunities!"

"But bear with me for one word more. Our feelings were mutually sincere. But you are indifferent to me now. The result of this will be that our love which was pure as gold will be misunderstood; others will blame the love that killed the milk-maids. Stand there a moment, if you will not come near, wait only there where you are, and see how I die of love."

All this Radha addressd to the clouds mistaking them for Krisna. At this stage she swoons and Vrinda, the maid, comes. She uses various methods to bring her mistress to her senses, but she fails. Her maids cry aloud, 'Radha is dead.' With-thin cotton placed near her nostrils they feel that there is still little breath left. She is carried to the Syamakunda, and they plunge her body into the holy waters—a usage followed by the Hindus at the moment of death and called the *Antarjali*, and the maidens whisper in her ear 'O Krisna, O Krisna,'—for the dying soul must hear the name of God. On hearing Krisna's name she slowly revives and looks helplessly around; weak and feeble she cannot speak. Vrinda says, 'At the first infatuation of love Krisna gave a bond to Radha that he would

না থাকে না থাকে, কপালে যা থাকে, তাই হবে
যথা যে থাকে, তারে আর কোথা কে,
ধ'রে বেঁধে কবে রেখে থাকে!
আর এক দুঃখ শুন কই হে তবে,
অকৈতব ভাবে ঘটা'লে কৈতবে,
এই হবে,—বঁধু আত্মসুখ হেন সম যেই প্রেম
হেন প্রেমের নাম আর কেউ না লবে।
শুনহে মাধব, বলবে লোকে সব, প্রেম করে ম'ল গোপিকা সবে॥
বঁধু তিলেক দাঁড়াও, গোপীগণের বঁধু, গোপীগণের প্রেমের মরণ
দেখে যাও হে॥

Rai-Unmadini by Krisna Kamala.

be her slave all his life. She now wants back this bond assuring the maids that she will go to Mathura with it and bring him back bound in chains as a runaway slave. Radha, though dying for love, cannot hear any one abuse Krisna. She speaks her foolish fears in gentle whispers to Vrinda*, 'Oh, do not bind him, do not speak rude words to him. If you say a rude word, his lovely face will grow pale, my heart breaks at the very thought of it.'

The spiritualisation of the Radha-Krisna legend

But Radha and Krisna are no historical personalities with enlightened Vaisnavas. Krisna Kamala†, the poet, says of Krisna, "When the God-vision becomes clear in the soul the devotee expresses it by the allegory of Krisna's coming to the Vrinda-groves. When the vision fades away, he considers Krisna to have gone to Mathura." Dasarathi‡, another poet of the old school, says, "If you O Krisna, come to my heart, it will be sacred as the Vrinda-groves. My devotion to you will be expressed in the symbol of Radha; my desire to reach the final emancipation will be as Vrinda the milkmaid. My body will be the palace of Nanda Ghosh and my love for you will be Yasoda herself. Bear, O Lord, the load of my sins as

* "বেঁধোনা তার কোমল করে,
ভৎ'সনা করো না তারে,
মনে যেন নাহি পায় দুখ।
যখন তারে মন্দ কবে,
চন্দ্র মুখ মলিন হবে,
তাই ভেবে ফাটে মোর বুক"
Rai-Unmadini by Krisna Kamala.

† "স্ফূর্তিরূপে মূর্তি যখন দেখেন নয়নে,
তখন ভাবেন কৃষ্ণ এল বৃন্দাবনে,
অদর্শনে ভাবেন কৃষ্ণ গেছে মধুপুরী।"
Rai-Unmadini by Krisna Kamala.

‡ "হৃদি বৃন্দাবনে বাস কর যদি কমলাপতি।
ওহে ভক্তিপ্রিয়, আমার ভক্তি হবে রাধা সতী॥
মুক্তি কামনা আমারি হবে বৃন্দা গোপ-নারী
আমার দেহ হবে নন্দের পুরী দেহ হবে মা যশোমতী,

once you did the mount Govardhan and destroy my six passions which are like the six emissaries of Kansa." The whole matter is thus spiritualised. Chaitanya Deva said, "As a young man yearns for his beloved, even so the soul yearns for God; it is for want of a better object of comparison that the Vaisnavas worship the Lord under this form."*

A person who yearns for God should not care for home for fame, or for any earthly consideration; he must renounce all. This idea is best expressed by the allegory of Radha and Krisna; for a woman, peculiary situated as she is, in the Hindu society, cannot contract love with a stranger without risking all that is near and dear to her. The spirit of martyrdom in this love is kindred to that for which the soul of a true devotee is always ready. Persecutions and all manner of earthly evils must come upon him as a matter of course and the world will call such a man, a knave, a maniac and what not; but he must stick to his faith in spite of all misfortune. Hence this symbol was adopted by the Vaisnavas to express their unflinching devotion and self-sacrifice for religion.

The emotions of Chaitanya Deva attributed to Radha

The personality of Chaitanya Deva gave a new form to this poetic literature. If one reads carefully a number of Vaisnava *padas* from such collections as the Padakalpalatika, Padakalpataru, and Padasamudra together with some of the biographies of Chaitanya Deva, they will be struck with the fact that nearly all the emotions ascribed to Radha are taken from those of Chaitanya Deva. The rapturous feelings on his seeing the clouds described

ধর ধর জনার্দ্দন, পাপ ভার গোবর্দ্ধন,
কামাদি ছয় কংস চরে ধ্বংস কর সম্প্রতি।"
A song by Dasarathi.

* "যুবকের আর্ত্তি যথা যুবতী দেখিয়া।
সেইরূপ আর্ত্তি আর না দেখি ভাবিয়া॥
একারণে ভক্তগণ ভজে যদুপতি।
পত্নীভাবে তার প্রতি স্থির করি মতি॥"
Sayings of Chaitanya Deva,
from Govinda Das's Karcha.

in his biographies are attributed to Radha in the *padas*. His fine frenzy lends charms to the similar mental states ascribed to her, and the sight of a *kadamba* flower, of the river Jumna, of the Vrinda groves, lifts both into a state of rapture. One who is not an adept in Chaitanya-literature will be charmed while reading the *padas* by the high poetical flights reached in the description of Radha's love for Krisna, and will not easily suspect that in the accounts of this love they are perusing the story of Chaitanya's realisation. In fact there are innumerable songs in this literature which echo the sentiments of Chaitanya Deva, and there is in this respect a difference between the love-songs of Radha and Krisna of the pre-Chaitanya period and those that followed him. The allegory becomes complete and beautiful in the latter as it bears the stamp of this influence, and the compilers of the collections of these songs have clearly indicated this by giving as a prologue to each chapter a song describing the emotions of Chaitanya Deva by Vasu Ghosh, Narahari or other poets who personally witnessed them. Such a prologue is called the *Gaura-Chandrika* or preliminary verses in praise of Chaitanya; the songs that follow are true to the spirit of the emotions of Chaitanya though the love of Radha and Krisna is apparently the subject of them. For instance, in the *Purvaraga* or Dawn of Love, we have several *Gaura-Chandrikas* to indicate the subsequent spirit of the songs. One *Gaura-Chandrika* runs thus* "To day I saw the moon of Navadvipa (Chaitanya);—resting his cheek upon

The Gaura-Chandrika

* "আজু হাম কি পেখনু নবদ্বীপ চন্দ।
করতলে করই বয়ান অবলম্ব॥
পুনঃ পুনঃ গতাগতি করু ঘরপথ।
ক্ষণে ক্ষণে কুলবনে চলই একান্ত॥
ছল ছল নয়নে কমল সুবিলাস।
নব নব ভাব করত পরকাশ॥
পুলক মুকুলবর ভরু সব দেহ।
বাণী মোহন কছু না পাওল থেহ॥" Pada No. 68,
Chapter I, Padakalpataru.

his hand he sits brooding quietly—lost in thought; he goes and comes without intention; as he wanders towards the woods where the flowers bloom, his eyes, large as full-blown lotuses, seem to float in tears. They betray great emotions. A strange gladness takes possession of him and Radhamohan (the poet) cannot enter into its meaning." After a prologue of this sort the compiler gives many passages of love between Radha and Krisna. The first runs as follows:*— "She (Radha) comes out of her house a hundred times; her mind is agitated; she looks wistfully to the shade of the *kadamba* trees; Oh, why has Radha become so? She cares not for infamy, nor for the scoldings of the elderly women of her house. Has some spirit possessed her? Her loose garments she does not care to adjust, she sits quietly and rises with a sudden start; her ornaments fall carelessly from her person."

Songs before and after Chaitanya.

The difference between the songs written before and after Chaitanya Deva is well marked; for instance, in a song on *Abhisara* or the stealthy visit of Radha to Krisna by night, we find Jayadeva, the Sanskrit poet of the 12th century, writing:† "The sounding *nupura* of your feet you must leave behind, for they will jingle; you should come to lover's bower putting on a dark-coloured *sari*." In the night she would have to go stealthily; so the poet recommends a dark *sari* to conceal her from the view of others and also to leave her *nupura* lest they should draw the attention of others by their

* "ঘরের বাহিরে, দণ্ডে শতবার, তিল তিল আসে যায়।
মন উচাটন, নিশ্বাস সঘন, কদম্ব কাননে চায়॥
রাই এমন কেন বা হৈল,
গুরু দুরুজন, ভয় নাহি মন, কোথা বা কি দেখ পাইল।
সদাই চঞ্চল, বসন অঞ্চল, সম্বরণ নাহি করে।
বসি থাকি থাকি, উঠয়ে চমকি, ভূষণ খসিয়া পড়ে॥"

Chandidas.

† "মুখরমধীরম্ ত্যজ মঞ্জীরম্
চল সখি কুঞ্জং সতিমির-পুঞ্জং শীলয় নীল-নিচোলম্"

Jayadeva.

jingling sounds. This is a very natural piece of advice to one who wants to meet her lover secretly; but let us read a love-song on *Abhisara* by a subsequent poet who wrote after Chaitanya Deva: "Her *nupura* called *bankaraja* sounds pleasantly and her bracelets make a merry jingling sound. She is surrounded by her maidens;—the high-sounding musical instruments, the *Dampha* and the *Ravava* are heard from a distance and a thin music flows on like waves of love." This seems quite unsuited to a song on *Abhisara* where secrecy must be the watchword. But the poet who wrote it had in his mind the processions of the *sankirtan* parties led by Chaitanya Deva where the *Dampha*, the *Ravava* and other musical instruments sounded their high notes and where the party marched, literally carried on by waves of love.

The *Abhisara*.

These associations and references, however anomalous they may appear at times, as marring the natural beauty of a description, do in fact nothing of the sort but lend a charm to it;—they only remind one of the spritual significance of these songs without affecting the poetry. The song referred to is highly poetical in spite of what might appear as its anomalies. I give below the full text.* "Towards the cool shade of the Vrinda-groves Radha goes to meet Krisna. Her face is as beautiful as a newly risen moon, the sandal-marks adorn her lovely cheeks, a mark of *kasturi* is on her forehead; behind her hang her beautiful braids adorned by a golden *jhapa* with silken pendants and a lovely pearl brightens her nose. The bracelets and the *nupura* called *Bankaraja* make a merry jingle as she walks; her maids surround her and the high notes of *Dampha* and *Ravaba* are heard. As she goes, Cupid flies away terror-struck, and the

* শ্যাম অভিসারে, চলল বর সুন্দরী, শীতল বৃন্দাবন মাঝে।
একে সে তরুণ ইন্দু, বদনক বিন্দু বিন্দু, কস্তুরী তিলক তাহে সাজে।
পিঠে দোলে বেণী খাপা, রত্নিয়া পাটের খোপা, নাসায় মুকুতারাজ সাজে।
কঙ্কণ রণরণি, বঙ্করাজ ধ্বনি, চলইতে সুমধুর বাজে।
চৌদিকে রমণী সাজে, ডম্ফ রবাব বাজে, চলে সবে মদন তরঙ্গে।
ধনি যে দিকে পয়ান করে, মদন পলায় ডরে, সৌরভে ভ্রমর ধায় সঙ্গে॥

sweet scents from her person attract the bees, who mistake her foot-prints for lotuses and maddened with the perfumes fall to the ground in the hope of drinking honey, and only kiss the foot-prints. The beauty of her person far excels that of a golden creeper or the lightning flash—it shows the utmost skill the Creator had in command; gracefully she walks as a royal swan; her arms rest on the shoulders of her maids. Poet Ananta Das says, they arrive at the bowers to the delight of Krisna." The *kasturi* mark, or *tilak*, is a holy sign referred to in the above song, and this is another feature that reminds us of the spiritual significance of the song. The foot-prints bear the light red mark of the *alta* dye and hence they are mistaken for lotuses. So without injuring the poetic beauty of the description or introducing anything to jar on the ear of the unsuspecting lay reader, the songs are fraught with a deep religious significance which the true Vaisnavas only are privileged to enjoy. The references are so clear that to those versed in Chaitanya-literature, Radha the princess, portrayed in the songs, will pass away and the personality of a handsome Brahmin youth, maddened by God's love, bewailing his separation from Krisna and holding communion in a trance with the clouds of heaven, the trees of the woods, and the waves of the Jumuna as though they were real friends who could tell him of the God he sought for, will appear as the only reality investing the songs with the significance and beauty of a higher plane.

Classification of emotions

The love-literature of the Vaisnavas is a unique treasure. It displays the nicest classification of emotions and all conceivable forms of tender feelings. The *Purvaraga* or the Dawn of Love is divided

চলইতে চরণের, সঙ্গে চলে মধুকর, মকরন্দ পানকি লোভে।
সৌরভে উনমত, ধরণী চুম্বয়ে কত, যাঁহা যাঁহা পদচিহ্ন শোভে॥
কনক লতা জিনি, জিনি সৌদামিনী, বিধির অবধি রূপ সাজে॥
রাজহংস জিনি, গমন সুলাবণী, অবলম্বন সখী কাঁধে।
অনন্ত দাস ভণে, মিলন নিকুঞ্জ বনে, পুরাইতে শ্যাম মনসাধে॥"

Padas Nos. 308-9, Chapter X, Padakalpataru.

into sub-heads such as—বয়ঃসন্ধি, সখ্যুক্তি, চিত্রপটদর্শন, স্নানকালে দৈতা, দর্শন etc. Then come রূপাভিসার, মান, কারণমান, নির্হেতুমান, মিলন, বাসকসজ্জা, বিপ্রলব্ধা, খণ্ডিতা, কলহান্তরিতা, আক্ষেপানুরাগ, রূপোল্লাস, প্রেমবৈচিত্র, মাথুর, সম্ভোগমিলন, বাৎসল্য, গোষ্ঠ, নৌকাবিলাস, সৌখ্য and many more. In Bhaktiratnakara we have 360 different kinds of the finer emotions of a lover's heart minutely classified. Each of these groups has hundreds of songs attached to it by way of illustration and has, besides, the usual prologues or *Gaura-Chandrika* which the poets have called সর্ব্বকালোচিত or lending permanent interest to the songs, suggesting spiritual associations.

The human interest and the underlying spirituality.

It is a curious literature. It deals with human passions mainly of the most platonic sort and has always a door open heavenwards. While perusing the accounts of love between man and woman in all its varied forms, the reader will every now and then find himself breathing a higher atmosphere; it is as though he comes to the junction of a river with the sea;—looking back, he sees a stream that comes through delightful landscapes, through groves and bowers that resound with human voices,—but looking forward he finds the endless sea that cuts off at the coast all connection with the human world and stretches on beneath the foaming waves till it loses itself in heaven.

Prabhasa

There is yet another account of Krisna's life which the Vaisnava poets have taken pains to describe; it is the scene of Prabhasa. Krisna who was a shephered boy has killed Kansa and is now the king of Mathura; no more the crown of peacock-feathers on his head, but a diadem sparkling with the richest jewels,—no more the rod *Pachanbari* in his hand to drive the cattle, but the sceptre to rule,—and no more playing the flute to madden poor Radha but playing with the fate of millions of his subjects. The Vrindavan scenes are forgotten. He has found his parents, Vasudeva and Daivaki; and cares not to hear that Nanda and Yasoda have grown blind with weeping for him. The shepherd boys no longer tend the cattle on the banks of the Jumna as in Krisna's time—they can-

not bear the sight of the Vrinda-groves. Radha's body is carried into the waters of the Jumuna and her maids know that in a few moments all will be over with her. At this time, the Dhanur-yajna or sacrifice of the bow is held in Mathura in the field of Prabhasa by Krisna. All the world is invited to attend it, but he does not invite the people of the Vrinda-groves. Nanda and Yasoda hear of the sacrifice and so do the shepherds. Uninvited they go, for they cannot bear separation from him any longer. The gate-keepers prevent them from having an interview with the king. Yasoda importunes them at every gate to be allowed to have a sight of her dear Krisna, but the gate-keepers take her to be a mad woman and will not allow her to pass into the Royal presence. Struck with grief Yasoda falls to the ground sighing in a manner which rends the heart to behold. Suddenly in the great hall Krisna with the *Sruk*—the golden sacrificial cup—reciting *mantras* falters in his speech; suddenly a tear starts to his eyes and he clasps his brother Balarama to his breast saying, "O tell me, Brother, where is my unfortunate mother, where are my comrades of the Vrinda-groves and where is my Radha? Away with my royal robes and kingdom;—where are the scenes of our boyhood—the dear Jumuna and its bowers?" The whole scene changes from the grandeur of a royal palace to the groves of Vrinda.

The reason why he did not invite the people of Vrindavan is that he held them as his own and it would be dishonouring the sacred relationship to send the formal letter of invitation due only to those who are more or less distant.

Govinda Das 1537-1612 A.D.

Of the *Padakartas* (lit. masters of songs) that followed Vidyapati and Chandidas, the greatest by unanimous consent of all parties is Govinda Das. We find accounts of this poet's life in Bhaktiratnakara, Narottamvilas, Saravali, Anuragavalli, and Bhaktamala. He was a son of Chiranjiva Sen, an illustrious companion of Chaitanya Deva and was a grandson, on his mother's side, of Damodara who was a great Sanskrit poet and

scholar of Srikhanda at the time. Chiranjiva left his village home at Kumaranagar and settled at Srikhanda where he had married. But the *Sakta* element there was powerful and showed open hostility towards the Vaisnavas. The result was that Govinda Das had to leave Srikhanda in his old age and settle at the village of Telia Budhuri on the Padma.

Govinda Das belonged to the Vaidya or the physician caste. His elder brother Rama Chandra Kaviraj was a famous scholar and a friend of Narottam Thakur. It is said that Govinda Das formerly belonged to the Sakta sect, but having recovered from a serious attack of dysentery at the age of forty through the help of a devout Vaisnava, he adopted that faith and became a disciple of the famous Srinivas Acharyya.

His songs on Radha and Krisna are held in great appreciation by the people. They are written in that sweet mixed dialect which is called the Brajabuli. Bengali by eliminating the Prakrit elements, and adopting the more rigid forms of Sanskrit has lost some of its natural mellifluousness but in Brajabuli we find a preponderance of Prakrit words together with a sprinkling of Maithili which contributes greatly to the softness of the mixed tongue. Brajabuli is not the spoken dialect of any province; yet it is not at all an artificial dialect. The choice Prakrit words to be found in old Bengali together with some of the soft-sounding Maithil words are combined in Brajabuli in an artistic manner. And the curious medley has been made singularly sweet and pleasing to the ear by the Vaisnavas in the *padas*. And Govinda Das particularly, who imitates Vidyapati in his songs, is a perfect master of this mixed language. His songs which are only next to those of Chandidas and Vidyapati in poetic merit are quite unmatched for their sweetness of language and show a wealth of rhythmical expression which brings him into the first rank of early Bengali poets.

Brajabuli

In the last years of his life we find the poet occupied in making a collection of his songs

His *padas*

at Budhuri. * "In close retirement he was occupied in making a compilation of his precious songs with a gladsome heart."

Govinda Das's *padas* were sung during his life-time by Gokul Das and Sridas, two brothers—inhabitants of Kancha Gariya, who enjoyed a great reputation in the Vaisnava community as singers; and it is related in Narottamvilas that Vira Bhadra Gosvami and Jiva Gosvami, two great apostles of the Vaisnava faith, delighted in his songs and being full of admiration for the poet embraced him as a mark of their satisfaction when his *padas* were sung before them by the two gifted brothers.

Besides his Bengali *padas*, Govinda Das wrote two Sanskrit works of great poetic beauty, *viz.*, Sangita Madhava and Karnamrita.

Govinda Das was born at Srikhanda in 1537 A.D. and died at Telia Budhuri in 1612 A.D.

I give below two *padas* by Govinda Das. Radha feels that she cannot bear life forsaken by Krisna. She says :—

†"Let my body after death be reduced to the earth of those paths which will be touched by the beautiful feet of Krisna. Let it be melted into the water of the tank where Krisna bathes. When I shall have expired, let my spirit live as the lustre of the mirror in which Krisna sees his face. O, let it be turned into a gentle breeze for the fan with which he cools himself. Wherever Krisna moves like a new-born cloud, may I become the sky behind, to form the background of his beautiful form."

* "নির্জ্জনে বসিয়া নিজ পদরত্নগণে।
করেন একত্র অতি উল্লসিত মনে॥"
Bhaktiratnakara, Chap. XIV.

† "যাঁহা যাঁহা অরুণ চরণে চলি যাত।
তাঁহা তাঁহা ধরণী হইএ মঝু গাত॥
যো সরোবরে পঁহু নিতি নিতি নাহ।
তাম ভরি সলিল হোই তথি মাহ॥
যো দরপণে পঁহু নিজ মুখ চাহ।
মঝু অঙ্গ জ্যোতি হোই তথি মাহ
যো বীজনে পঁহু বীজই গাত,
মঝু অঙ্গ তাহি হোই মৃদু বাত॥

* "He for whose sake the reproofs of the elders and the slanderous tongues of the wicked were nothing to me;—he for whom I loved all the ills of life as if they were good fortune,—and for whom I broke my sacred maidenhood, foregoing the law observed by wedded wives,—strange, passing strange it is, that he wants to forsake me! How hard is this to believe! He who would leave his palace of pearls in expectation of meeting me and pass the whole night on thorny briers looking wistfully towards my path and he for whom, timid damsel that I am, I would walk on dark nights so lost in love that if a venomous snake had coiled round my feet, I should have considered it as *nupura* to adorn them. Says Govinda Das, it is not possible for him to forget this great love."

Jnan Das and Balarama Das.

Next to Govinda Das we may name Jnan Das and Balarama Das. Jnan Das was born at Kandra, in the district of Birbhum and Balarama Das belonged to the Vaidya caste and was an inhabitant of Srikhanda. His father was one Atmarama Das. Both Jnan Das and Balarama Das imitated the style of Chandidas their songs as Govinda Das did that of Vidyapati and the two poets were contemporary with Govinda Das. One of the most important festivals of the Vaishnavas that was ever held in Bengal was the Mahotsava ceremony of Srikheturi. Narottam Das who had renounced the world and embraced

যাঁহা পঁহু ভরমই জলধর শ্যাম।
মঝু অঙ্গ গগন হোই তছু ঠাম॥"

* "যাহক লাগি, গুরুগঞ্জনে মন মঝু, দুরজন কিয়ে নাহি কেল।
যাহক লাগি, কুলবতী ধরত সমাপল, লাজে তিলাঞ্জলি দেল॥
সজনি জাননু কঠিন পরাণ।
ব্রজপুর পরিহরি যাওব সো হরি শুনইতে নাহি বাহিরান॥
যো মঝু সরস সমাগম লাগস মণিময় মন্দির ছোড়ি।
কণ্টক কুঞ্জে জাগি নিশি বাসব পন্থ নেহারত মোরি॥
যাহক লাগি চলইতে চরণে পড়ল ফনি মণি-মঞ্জীর করি মানি।
গোবিন্দ দাস ভণ কৈছন সো দিন বিছুরব ইহ অনুমানি॥"

Pada 1624, second chap., Padakalpataru.

the vow of *Sannyasin* was the heir to the *gadi* of Kheturi, the deceased Raja, Krisna Chandra Datta being his father. As, however, he did not accept the Raj, but made a gift of it to his cousin Santosh Datta, the latter out of gratitude and admiration for the Vaisnava worthy called in all members of the Vaisnava community to Srikheturi at a Mahotsava ceremony held by him with great *eclat* in 1504 A.D. The ceremony was a grand success and was in fact an historic event in Vaisnava society having been graphically described by many writers, chiefly by Narahari Chakravarty who in his Narottam-Vilas gives an elaborate list of the important members of the Vaisnava community who attended it. Govinda Das, Jnan Das, Balarama Das were all there and Vrindavan Das, the famous author of Chaitanya Bhagavata, was at the time a hoary-headed old man, described as 'venerable and learned' who took a prominent part in the affairs of the ceremony. We also find Basanta Ray there—the clever poet who revised Vidyapati's poems and changed his Maithili to elegant Brajabuli in which we find his poems in the Bengali collections of the present day. The Mahotsava ceremony at Srikheturi is indeed a landmark in the history of the Vaisnavas and a sort of light-house discovering to our view a whole panorama of scenes in which the illustrious Vaisnavas of the early 16th century, whose names are so familiar to us by their writings, played an important part. Besides, the history of social manners and customs and ways of life of the Vaisnavas of that period have been faithfully recorded in the accounts of this festival.

The Mahotsava at Srikheturi, 1504 A.D.

About the other *Padakartas* we jot down the following notes :—

Yadunandan Das, born in 1537 A.D. He wrote an historical work called Karnananda in 1607 at the command of Srimati Hemalata, daughter of Srinivas Acharyya. He was 70 years old when he wrote the above work. Yadunandan, besides, translated Govinda-

Yadunandan Das, born 1537.

lilamrita by Krisna Das Kaviraj and Vidagdha Madhava, a drama by Rupa Gosvami from Sanskrit into Bengali metrical verse.

Yadunandan Chakravarti wrote Radha-Krisna-Lilakadamba, a Bengali poem containing 6000 couplets. He was a disciple of Gadadhara Das.

Yadunandan Chakravarti.

Prema Das, the Vaisnava name adopted by Purusottam (Siddhanta Vagisa) was born in Kulia in Navadvipa. He wrote the Vansi-Siksa, already noticed on page 513, in 1712 A.D. and translated Chaitanya Chandrodaya, a Sanskrit drama by Kavikarnapura into Bengali verse.

Prema Das.

Gauri Das, a highly respected personage of the Vaisnava community and a contemporary of Chaitanya Deva. It is said that the latter presented Gauri Das with a Gita copied by himself and also an oar with which he rowed his small pleasure-boat on the Ganges. Gauri made an image of Chaitanya Deva in Nimba wood when the latter was on the eve of taking Sannyasin's vows. This historic image is still worshipped at Ambikanagar in Kalna.

Gauri Das.

Narahari Sarkar (1487-1540) of Srikhanda—a friend and follower of Chaitanya Deva. Chaitanya Deva is said to have exclaimed when in a trance in a village of southern India, "O Narahari, dear as my life, where art thou now? Recite Krisna's name once more and I will embrace thee."* Narahari belonged to the Vaidya caste. His father's name was Narayan. He wrote many *padas* in praise of Chaitanya.

Narahari Sarkar, 1487-1540 A.D.

Vasu Ramananda—a grandson of Maladhara Vasu who translated the Bhagavata into Bengali. Ramananda was a contemporary of Chaitanya Deva.

Vasu Ramananda.

* "কখন বলেন কোথা প্রাণ নরহরি।
হরি নাম শুনি তোমা আলিঙ্গন করি॥"

Govinda Das's Karcha.

Ray Ramananda

Ray Ramananda—the illustrious Prime Minister of King Prataprudra of Orissa and author of the Sanskrit drama, Jagannatha-Vallabha which Chaitanya delighted to read. Ramananda Ray was a great friend and follower of Chaitanya. He has left some Bengali *padas* of singular beauty; the following one finds a place in Chaitanya-Charitamrita and has a deep spiritual meaning which must be explained in the light of Vaisnava philosophy:

*1. "At first love dawned (on my heart) by a glance of his eye.

2. It went on growing and knew no stop.

3. When Cupid entered our souls, forgetful we became that he was a man and I a woman.

4. O maidens, ask him, how could he have forgot all this story now!

5. Nor had we, in this love, waited for a secret agent or any third party. In this union Cupid was our guide." The idea contained in the 3rd stanza is mystic.

Rama Ray died in 1584 A.D.

Narahari Chakravarty

Narahari Chakravarty—author of Narottamavilas and Bhakti-ratnakara—the celebrated biographical and historical works already mentioned wrote a large number of *padas* under the name of Ghanasyam Das. There is also another Ghanasyam—a *padakarta*, son of Divya Sinha and grandson of Govinda Das, the illustrious poet.

* "পহিলহি রাগ নয়ন ভঙ্গে ভেল।
অনুদিন বাঢ়ল অবধি না গেল॥
না সো রমণ না হাম রমণী।
দুহু মনে মনোভব পেশল জানি॥
এ সখি সে সব প্রেম কাহিনী।
কানু ঠামে কহবি বিছুরহ জানি॥
না খোঁজল দূতি না খোঁজল আন।
দুহুঁ কো মিলনে মধ্যস্থ পাঁচ বাণ॥"

Ramagopal Das—the author of Rasakalpavalli (written in 1643 A.D.) wrote many *padas* of exquistie beauty and his son Pitambar Das, author of Rasamanjari, contributed a good number of *padas* to Vaisnava collections.

Ramagopal Das.

Pitambar Das.

Jagadananda, a Vaidya by caste. He was a descendant of Mukunda, one of the contemporaries of Chaitanya. They were originally residents of Srikhanda, but afterwards settled at the village of Yophalai in the district of Burdwan. Jagadananda cared only for sweet words in his *padas*. We have come across some of the drafts of his composition in his own handwriting, which show that he was far from being a born poet; he acquired the power of writing poetry by mastering the vocabulary of sweet-sounding words, as a school-boy acquires a knowledge of Geography by noting the places in his memory. One of the drafts shows that he made himself busy to find out the synonyms of words to be used in his songs. On the other page of the said draft he scribbled doggerels with the words on his list; he cared for nothing else than to create a pleasant jingle with them. He writes a line and then cuts it through and repeats the process several times, all the while evidently turning over the other page with the object of drawing upon the vocabulary which seems to be the only source of his inspiration; thus correcting words continually with the help derived from it, he lights upon highly ornate expressions and composes a couplet in which rhythm is done to a fault; such couplets we find in the Padakalpataru and we cannot help enjoying the humour of the Herculian effort put forth to give them the shape in which they are finally presented to us. They hardly convey any sense through the jingle of words which it was the primary object of the poet to create. Jagadananda died in 1704 at Yophalai where a *mela* is held every year to commemorate his death. A collection of his *padas* with a learned preface was published not long ago by the late Babu Kalidas Nath of Calcutta.

Jagadananda

Vansi Vadana, son of Chhakari Chattopadhyay. Vansi Vadana was born in the village of Patuli in 1498 A.D.

Vansi Vadana.

Rama Chandra—a grandson of Vansi Vadana. He settled at the village of Radhanagar. He migrated from Patuli to Radhanagar on the Padma. Born in 1534 A.D., died in 1584 A.D.

Rama Chandra.

Sachi Nandan—brother of Rama Chandra. Besides *padas* he wrote a poem called the Gauranga-Vijaya.

Sachi Nandan.

Paramesvari Das: We find a mention of this *Padakarta* in connection with the *Mahotsava* ceremony at Kheturi which he attended in 1504 A.D.

Paramesvari Das.

Yadunath Acharyya—son of Ratnagarbha Acharyya, a friend and follower of Chaitanya Deva. The family which originally resided at Sylhet migrated to Navadvipa during Chaitanya Deva's life-time.

Yadunath Acharyya.

Prasad Das—a native of Visnupur in the district of Bankura. He had the title of Kavipati.

Prasad Das.

Uddhava Das—a friend of Vaisnava Das who compiled the celebrated Padakalpataru—an inhabitant of Tena Vaidyapura.

Uddhava Das.

Radha Vallabh Das,—son of Sudhakar Mandal of Kanchagadia and the compiler of Bengali translation Vilapa Kusumanjali by Raghu Nath Goswami.

Radha Vallabh Das.

Ray Sekhar or Sasi Sekhar—an inhabitant of the village of Parana in the district of Burdwan. He lived early in the 18th century.

Ray Sekhar.

Paramananda Sen—a great Sanskrit poet who also wrote *padas* in Bengali. He was born in 1524. He is more commonly known by his title Kavikarnapur. He wrote his celebrated Chaitanya-Chandrodaya-Nataka in 1572 A.D.

Paramananda Sen.

Vasudeva Ghosh, Madhava Ghosh and Govindananda Ghosh, three brothers and contemporaries of Chaitanya Deva. All of them composed *padas*

Vasudeva Ghosh.

in Bengali. They were originally inhabitants of Kumarhatta, but finally settled at Navadvipa. They belonged to the Kayastha caste. Vasu Ghosa's *padas* in praise of Chaitanya are the best of their kind and they generally form the *Gaur Chandrika* or the prelude to the songs of Radha and Krisna in all collections of Vaisnava *padas*. The present Maharaja of Dinajpur is descended from Vasu Ghosa through one of his daughters.

Champati Ray.

Champati Ray—a famous *Padakarta*. We find the following line about him in the Sanskrit notes affixed to the Padamrita-Samudra by Radha Mohan Thakura.

*"There lived in Southern India a great follower of Chaitanya by the name of Champati. He is this famous *Padakarta*."

Daivakinandan.

Daivakinandan, a contemporary of Chaitanya Deva and author of Vaisnava-Vandana.

Narasinha Deva.

Narasinha Deva—Raja of Pakva Palli, whose efforts to vanquish Narottam Thakur in a controversial discussion culminated in complete failure and his own acceptance of the creed of the Vaisnavas. The Raja wrote several *padas* of great beauty.

Vira Hamvira.

Raja Vira Hamvira of Visnupur to whom a reference has already been made, composed many *padas* some of which we find in the Bhaktiratnakara by Narahari Chakravarti.

Madhavi.

Madhavi—a sister of Sikhi Mahiti and a contemporary of Chaitanya—wrote *padas* under the name of Madhavi Das. She was renowned for her piety and purity of life.

This is briefly, an account of only a few of the great masters of songs who followed Chaitanya Deva. A brief notice

*"চম্পতির্নাম দাক্ষিণাত্য-শ্রীকৃষ্ণ-চৈতন্য-ভক্তরাজঃ
কশ্চিৎ আসীৎ স এব গীতকর্ত্তা।"

Padamrita-Samudra

of some more *Padakartas* is to be found in my Bengali work 'Vangabhasa-O-Sahitya,' in the Bengali Encyclopædia—the Visva Kosa and in the collection of songs in praise of Chaitanya Deva edited by the late Babu Jagadbandhu Bhadra and published by the Vangiya Sahitya Parishat, Calcutta. I give below a list of the *Padakartas* whose *padas* I have been able to collect up to the present with the number of *padas* they composed.

A list of Padakartas

NAME	NUMBER OF PADAS.	NAME	NUMBER OF PADAS.
Ananta Das	47	Ananta Acharyya	2
Akbar Ali	1	Atmaram Das	9
Ananda Das	3	Bhupati Nath	7
Bhuvana Das	2	Chandi Das	960
Chandra Sekhar	3	Champati Thakur	13
Churamani Das	1	Chaitanya Das	15
Sankar Das	4	Sachinandan Das	3
Sasi Sekhar	3	Syama Chandra Das	1
Syama Das	3	Syamananda	7
Siva Ray	1	Sivaram Das	25
Sivananda	4	Siva Sahachari	1
Sivai Das	7	Srinivas	3
Srinivasacharyya	2	Sekhar Ray	176
Dalapati	1	Dina Ghose	1
Dinahina Das	3	Dukhi Krisna Das	4
Dukhini	2	Daivakinandan Das	4
Dharama Das	3	Gatigovinda	1
Gadadhara	3	Giridhara	1
Gupta Das	1	Gokulananda	1
Gokul Das	1	Gopal Das	6
Gopal Bhatta	2	Gopikanta	1
Gopiramana	1	Govardhan Das	17
Govinda Das	458	Govinda Ghosh	12
Gaurmohan	2	Gaur Das	2

NAME	NUMBER OF PADAS	NAME	NUMBER OF PADAS
Gaur Sundara	3	Gauri Das	2
Ghanaram Das	14	Ghanasyam Das	35
Hari Das	7	Hari Vallabh	4
Harekrisna Das	2	Hareram Das	2
Jagadananda Das	5	Jagannath Das	9
Jagamohan Das	2	Jaykrisna Das	1
Jnan Das	194	Jnanhari Das	2
Kabir	1	Kaviranjan	9
Kamarali	1	Kanai Das	4
Kanu Das	14	Kamadeva	1
Kalikisore	179	Krisna Kanta Das	29
Krisna Das	22	Krisnapramoda	2
Krisna Prasad	5	Laksmi Kanta Das	1
Lochan Das	30	Mathura Das	1
Madhusudana	5	Mahesa Vasu	1
Manohar Das	6	Madhava Ghosh	9
Madhava Das	65	Madhavacharyya	5
Madhavi Das	17	Madhu	3
Murari Gupta	5	Murari Das	1
Mohan Das	27	Mohani Das	4
Natavara	1	Nandan Das	1
Nanda (Dvija)	1	Nayananda Das	22
Narasinha Das	1	Narahari Das	22
Narottam Das	61	Nava Kanta Das	1
Nava Chandra Das	2	Naranarayan Bhupati	1
Nasir Mamud	1	Nripati Sinha	1
Nrisinha Deva	4	Parameswar Das	1
Paramananda Das	12	Pitambar Das	0
Phakir Habir	1	Phatan	1
Raghu Nath	3	Rasamaya Das	2
Rasamayi Dasi	1	Rasik Das	3
Ramakanta	1	Ram Chandra Das	6
Ram Das	2	Rami	2

Name	Number of Padas.	Name	Number of Padas
Ram Ray	1	Radha Mohan	175
Raja Sinha Bhupati	4		
Radha Vallabh	29	Radha Madhava	1
Ramananda	15	Ramananda Das	1
Ramananda Vasu	9	Rupanarayan	3
Sadananda	1	Sal Beg	1
Sinha Bhupati	7	Sundara Das	2
Subal	1	Sekha Jalal	1
Sekh Bhik	1	Sekh Lal	1
Saiyad Martuja	1	Tulasi Das	1
Uddhava Das	110	Vala Deva	1
Balarama Das	131	Balai Das	3
Vallabha Das	26	Vansi Vadana	38
Basanta Ray	33	Vasudeva Ghosa	134
Vijayananda Das	1	Vidyapati	800
Vindu Das	4	Vipra Das	6
Vipradas Ghosa	161	Visvambhara Das	2
Vira Chandra Kar	1	Vira Narayan	2
Vira Vallabh Das	1	Vira Hamvira	2
Vaisnava Das	27	Vrindavan Das	30
Vrajananda	1	Yadunandan	95
Yadu Nath Das	17	Yadupati	1
Yasoraja Khan	1	Yadavendra	3

Next to Vidyapati and Chandi Das, the following *pada-kartas* enjoy precedence for their poetical excellence and delineation of tender emotions :—

1. Govinda Das
2. Jnan Das
3. Balarama Das
4. Ray Sekhar
5. Ghanasyam
6. Ray Vasanta
7. Ananta Das
8. Yadunandan Das
9. Vansi Vadana
10. Vasu Ghosa
11. Narahari

This *pada* literature is a mine of poetry. It breathes freedom from the rigid style of the old writers who were always aiming at classical figures of speech. Here we find classical figures only occasionally, but more often the poets hit upon common-place objects and translate them into apt and happy similes. The style of the best amongst the *padakartas* is free from all slavish imitation of Sanskrit models and is full of appropriate homely words and happy turns of expression taken from common life which discovers the innate strength of our language. By adopting the Brajabuli, the *padakartas* not only made their language a fitter vehicle of tender thought, but gave scope for contributions to this literature by poets outside Bengal. Hence it is that we find the songs of Champatipati, a poet of southern India and of Madhavi and Rama Ray, who belonged to Orissa, collected in Bengali compilation of songs. These poets found it easier to adopt Brajabuli than Bengali, as the former had in it a profuse admixture of Hindi which people of all parts of India spoke and understood.

The *padas* breathe a spirit of freedom.

The advantages of adopting Brajabuli

In an earlier chapter of our history we have noticed that rustic songs such as *Manik Chandra Rajar Gan* were full of common-place words taken from life. The writers of these songs could not use Sanskritic expressions simply because they were illiterate; but the *pada* literature of the Vaisnavas abounds, as I have already said, in loose Prakrit forms—not as a result of ignorance of Sanskrit, for these poets were almost all Sanskrit scholars, but because they had a finer power of perception as compared with the poets of the Sanskritic School and knew better than they, that the poetic vision must be supplied from life and not from classical studies alone. They drew richly, moreover, from the living fountain of love that was before them—in the ecstasies of Chaitanya's divine love.

The *padakartas* prefer Prakrita forms.

The fastidious Hindu Society and Radha.

As in style of composition, so in their descriptions of social life, the same spirit of freedom dominates. In the poetic literature of the Hindus, the fidelity of woman has always formed the loftiest theme and has naturally supplied the highest poetic inspiration. But Vaisnava literature glories in Radha who breaks the sacred ties of domestic life and walks in the unrestrained path of freedom from all social bondage. How could a society, so rigidly fastidious in point of woman's honour admire Radha and allow her such an elevated place in their literature? The answer is a very simple one. Radha, as has been already said, is a religious symbol—a typification of the free worship offered by the human soul to God. In Bengali songs the spiritual significance of this symbol has been made apparent by associations with Chaitanya Deva—Radha having been represented in them as the very spirit of God-realisation, manifested by the great devotee.

Domestic relationship given a high place.

Besides, viewed in a spiritual light, domestic relationship has been given a greatly elevated place in the literature of the Vaisnavas. In the parent, in the child, in the friend and in all around us, it is the same benign hand that the Vaisnavas mark, offering love and unsolicited service to us. Domestic ties are, therefore, sacred to them. Their literature is a history of this all-sacrificing disinterested love.

Nothing in return.

Nothing in return is its motto. The flower that diffuses its sweet scent does not want any return, nor do the rays of the sun that warms you, nor the air which you breathe—without which you cannot live for a moment, and all this represents the sort of love which a real lover must have for the world. Those who want return in love and consider it a marketable commodity are not privileged to have access into the *pada* literature of the Vaisnavas. When poor Radha was dying—being forsaken by Krisna, she tells Vrinda "Say no cruel words to him. His face beautiful as the moon will turn pale, if you use rude words. My heart breaks at the thought of

it." Yet no one could be more cruel than was Krisna to Radha! This may be denominated mere sentimentalism and be unacceptable to the materialistic mind. But the Vaisnavas aspire to practising an absolutely resigned love in life, which has unnumbered woes to poison it unless we see everything in the spirit of such love.

The collections of *padas*

Of the collections of *padas* by the Vaisnava-masters the most bulky is reported to be Padasamudra, compiled by Manohar Das in the middle of the 16th century. It is said to contain 15,000 *padas*. This vast collection has not yet seen the light and the only manuscript-copy of the work of which we have heard, was with the late Haradhan Bhaktinidhi of Badanganj in the district of Hooghly. He used to send me songs copied from the work now and then, but since his death I have not been able to trace the Ms.

Pada-Samudra.

Padamrita Samudra.

The next collection Padamrita-Samudra was made by Radhamohan Thakur, grandson of Srinivas Acharyya towards the end of the 16th century. The learned compiler affixed Sanskrit annotations to the Bengali *padas* in his collection, thereby showing great scholarship. The annotations are named as the Mahabhavanusaritika. There are many smaller collections, some of which enjoy great popularity, such as Padakalpalatika by Gaur Mohan Das, Gita-Chintamani by Hari Vallabh, Gita-Chandrodaya by Narahari Chakravarti, Pada-Chintamanimala by Prasad Das, Rasamanjari by Pitambar Das, Lila-Samudra, Padarnavasaravali, Gita Kalpalatika and other works by unknown compilers.

Smaller collections

But we have not yet named the collection which is the best of them all, and deservedly enjoys the greatest popularity. It is Padakalpataru by Vaisnava Das. Vaisnava Das, (lit. servant of the Vaisnavas), is the title which the compiler adopted in token of humility. His name was Gokulananda Sen and he was a Vaidya by caste. He was an inhabitant of Tena Vaidyapur in the district of Burdwan and he compiled his work early in the 18th century.

Padakalpataru

It would be difficult to recover Padasamudra which is by far the greatest collection of the Vaisnava songs. Of the rest Padamritasamudra by Radha Mohan Thakur is a much smaller collection than Padakalpataru; but the compiler has inserted in it more than 400 *padas* composed by himself, which is too large a number to find place in the collection if we consider their poetic excellence. In the larger collection by Vaisnava Das we find only 27 *padas* of his own and these he was bound to insert as preliminary *padas* in honour of the great Vaisnava masters. Pada-Chintamani, though a very small collection, is a singularly fine one containing 351 *padas*. The only defect of this work lies in the anxiety of the compiler to select *padas* which please the ear in preference to those which appeal to the heart.

Its relative merit

The Padakalpataru is a collection of 3,101 *padas* and is divided into four *shakhas* or chapters. The first chapter contains 11 *pallavas* or sub-chapters. The number of *padas* in them is 265. The second chapter has 24 *pallavas* with 351 *padas*. The third has 31 *pallavas* with 965 *padas* and the fourth chapter 36 *pallavas* and with 1,520 *padas*. The classification is made in the order in which emotions grow and develop in the heart. The subtlety and fineness of this classification will interest the student of Psychology. Though the compiler has followed the rules of rhetoric in the classification of the songs, the songs themselves are not directed by rhetoric, but come from the heart of the poets direct and appeal to the heart of the readers.

A classification of the finer emotions

In the preliminary account given by Vaisnava Das in his Padakalpataru we find the following lines:—

*"In the line of Srinivas Acharyya was born Radha Mohan Thakur. Who can describe the noble qualities that he possessed. He was a second incarnation of Srinivas Acharyya and his heart was the

Vaisnava Das's account of himself

* "আচার্য্য প্রভুর বংশ শ্রীরাধামোহন।
কে করিতে পারে তার গুণের বর্ণন॥

true home of love for Chaitanya. Radha Mohan Thakur compiled a collection of *padas* known as Padamritasamudra (a song-ocean of nectar). I used to sing the *padas* from that work and was greatly interested in them. I travelled in various countries and collected other *padas* including those found in the Padamrita-samudra in my work. He was my model and I compiled my book after his work and named it Padakalpataru."

যাহার বিগ্রহে গৌর প্রেমের নিবাস।
হেন শ্রীআচার্য্য প্রভুর দ্বিতীয় প্রকাশ॥
গ্রন্থ কৈলা পদামৃতসমুদ্র আখ্যান।
জন্মিল আমার লোভ তাহা করি গান॥
নানা পর্য্যটনে পদ সংগ্রহ করিয়া।
তাহার যতেক পদ সব তাহা লইয়া॥
সেই মূল গ্রন্থ অনুসারে ইহা কৈল।
প্রাচীন প্রাচীন পদ যতেক পাইল॥
এই গীত পদকল্প নাম কৈনু সার॥

Padakalpataru, Pada No. 3031.

Supplementary Notes

To

CHAPTER V

Chaitanya Deva himself was not the organiser of the Vaisnava community that afterwards sprang up in Bengal. In fact, it was not his mission to make codes and regulations for the guidance of a small community. He spoke for all men, lived for all men, and lost in the love of God as he was, he was not at all actuated by any desire of a secular kind, to establish a community and claim the glory of being its founder. But a great idea—the idea of equality and freedom—was put into a stereotyped and orthodox society. The Chandals and the Pariahs felt that they were no hereditary bondsmen;—the Sudras felt that the Brahmins were not the only souls privileged to interpret the truths of religion. Freeing themselves from the iron grip of Brahmanic rule and the trammels of monastic codes, the people of all castes gave quick response to the call from the new order that was being formed. In the Buddhistic age fallen women and men who had lost their caste, flocked to the sanctuary of the *viharas* and shaving their heads as a sign of penitence became monks and nuns. On the revival of Hinduism the portals of society were closed against this class of people and they had no *locus standi* in the land of their birth, after the fall of the Buddhistic monasteries. These men and women heard of the great idea of universal love preached by the Vaisnavas who had raised the flag of equality for all men and they quickly responded to the call. Chaitanya Deva lived at Puri for the last 18 years of his life and all this time he dwelt on

Chaitanya did not organise the Vaisnava society.

The idea of equality and freedom

The Buddhist masses.

man's relation to God and showed the power and beauty of the Divine grace, by his own life and example. In Khardah and Santipur, however, Nityananda and Advaitacharyya initiated a great movement for organising the Vaishnava community on a new basis. The place is still pointed out at Khardah where 1200 Nedas or shaven men and 1300 Nedis or shaven women—the Buddhist Bhikshus and Bhikshunis came to the great Vaisnava apostle Nityananda and surrendered themselves to him. He took them into his new order. So glad were these people at being admitted to the new order, that they have since held a *mela* at Khardah every year in commemoration of the event. Nityananda is justly called *patita pavana* or "a friend of the fallen" owing to his sympathetic attitude towards the out-castes. The fallen women of Hindu society also, against whom it has always closed its gate with iron bars, found a place in the Vaisnava community. Widow marriage is allowed amongst the lay Vaisnavas, who override all considerations of caste; in fact it is forbidden to ask a Vaisnava to what caste he had belonged before he accepted the Vaisnava faith. With what indignation the Hindu society looked upon this movement may be seen from the following *slokas* in Tantraratnakara. Vatuka Bhairava asked Ganadeva if the great demon Tripurasura killed by Siva was altogether annihilated or still lived in the form of a spirit, Ganadeva answered:

Nityananda and Advaita.

The Buddhist Bhikshus and Bhikshunis.

The total upsetting of the old Society.

*"The great demon Tripurasura being killed by Siva reduced himself into three parts in great rage, and devised many plans for the overthrow of the Saiva religion, and for misguiding the people and taking vengeance on the followers of Siva. The first part appeared in the womb of Sachi Devi and came into

Chaitanya and his companions as incarnations of the Demon Tripurasura.

* "স এব ত্রিপুরো দৈত্যো নিহতঃ শূলপাণিনা।
ক্রুদ্ধয়া পরয়াবিষ্ট আত্মানমকরোত্রিধা॥

the world as Chaitanya; the second part was incarnated in Nityananda who wielded a great power and the third as Advaita. Assuming these three forms this lord of the demons came to earth in the *Kali Yuga* and deluded the world by teaching effeminacy."—effeminacy because Chaitanya Deva did not recognise such cruel rites in religion as human or animal sacrifices, but taught that one should know his sins and in a truly penitent spirit approach his God with tears! The Vaisnavas abstained from fish and meat altogether and from all intoxicating drugs and liquors; they were thus effeminate in the eyes of those who drank wine, took *ganja*, ate all kinds of meat and were followers of *kapaliks*—those dreadful people who could perpetrate the most heinous crimes without a blush.

An incarnation of God.

The lay Vaisnavas as a retort composed *slokas* to prove that Chaitanya was Visnu incarnated in the flesh and interpolated them in the manuscripts of the Vamana Purana, the Vayu Purana, the Naradiya Purana, the Bhavisya Purana, the Matsya Purana, the Visnu Jamala, the Garuda Purana, the Visnu Purana, the Kurma Purana, the Devi Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Valmiki Purana, the Nrisinha Purana, and in the Mahabharata. These *slokas* signify in the form of prophecy that God will be incarnated in Chaitanya Deva in *kali yuga*.

The activity with which the Vaisnavas proceeded with their task of reforming society was remarkable. There is no sphere of Bengali life which does not bear the stamp of their influence.

শিবধর্ম্মবিনাশায় লোকানাং মোহহেতবে।
হিংসার্থং শিবভক্তানামুপায়ানসৃজদ্বহূন্॥
অংশেনাদ্যেন গৌরাখ্যঃ শচীগর্ভে বভূব সঃ।
নিত্যানন্দো দ্বিতীয়েন প্রাদুরাসীন্মহাবলঃ॥
অদ্বৈতাখ্যস্তৃতীয়েন ভাগেন দনুজাধিপঃ।
প্রাপ্তে কলিযুগে ঘোরে বিজহার মহীতলে॥
ততো দুরাত্মা ত্রিপুরঃ শরীরৈস্ত্রিভিরাদরৈঃ।
উপপ্লবায় লোকানাং নাস্তীকাবমুপাদিশৎ॥*

At early dawn in the winter-months every village in Bengal resounds with the *kirtans* of a class of Vaisnavas called the Vairagis who visit every house, from the hut of the rustic to the palace of the Raja, calling upon all to rise from their bed and offer thanks to God, as another day has dawned. Amongst the Tipras, a hill-tribe living in the hills of Tippera, who speak broken Bengali, I found in circulation such learned Vaisnava works as the Chaitanya-Charitamrita and the Chaitanya-Bhagavata. Many of these men wear *tilak* marks like the Vaisnavas, and the Manipurians are all zealous followers of the creed of Chaitanya Deva. The people of Orissa are more devoted followers of Chaitanya Deva than even the Bengalees. The Vaisnavas were anxious to do away with the pride of caste altogether. The *Padakartas* and other authors among the Vaisnavas have adopted the title of Das or servant in the place of their family surnames as a mark of humility This word Das in the orthodox society of Bengal is exclusively used by castes inferior to the Brahmins. But in the Vaisnava literature all good Brahmins, not to speak of the inferior castes, delight in calling themselves 'Das' and thereby eliminate the titles indicating their family status; this has often made it exceedingly difficult for us to find out to what caste or family a certain author amongst the Vaisnavas belonged.

The title 'Das.'

The whole of the old Bengali literature, subsequent to Chaitanya Deva, bears the mark of the influence of the Vaisnavas. The original Ramayana by Krittivasa is lost, but from fragmentary manuscripts of the 16th century that have come to hand, we may surmise that the poet conformed to the original epic of Valmiki though he considerably abridged it; the interpolating hands of later writers, are, however, distinctly traceable in the subsequent manuscripts and in the modernised version of the work which is found in the market. In this book we find the Raksasas or demons metamorphosed into saints and Vaisnavas. In the whole range of our literature we can scarcely find a more curious matter

Vaisnava influence in the Ramayana.

than this transformation by Vaisnava poets of the Raksasas of the Ramayana. In the original epic of Valmiki they are great warriors,—fighting to the last on the battle-field with unflinching heroism. But in the modern editions of Krittivasa's Ramayana we frequently meet a great Raksasa on the battle-field with the spirit of a devout Vaisnava; he sees in Rama an incarnation of God, and when such a feeling dominates in his mind, the battle is naturally transformed into a pulpit and sermons and hymns become the order of the day. Virabahu, a Raksasa, son of Ravana, has come to fight with Rama in the battle-field. Here is the description :—* "From the back of the elephant Virabahu beholds Rama. His human form with dark blue complexion—the colour that we find in a fresh tuft of grass—is simply a mask to conceal his divinity. His locks hang in beautiful curls and his forehead is large. His demeanour is quiet and he is kind to all. The marks of ধ্বজ (flag), বজ্র (thunder-bolt), and of অঙ্কুশ (hook)—indicative of divine power—are distinct in his person.

* "গজপৃষ্ঠ হতে বীর নেহালে শ্রীরাম।
কপটে মনুষ্য দেহ দুর্ব্বাদল শ্যাম॥
চাঁচর চিকুর রামের চৌরস কপাল।
প্রসন্ন শরীর রাম পরম দয়াল॥
ধ্বজ বজ্রাঙ্কুশ চিহ্ন অতি মনোহর।
ভুবন মোহন রূপ শ্যাম সুন্দর॥
রামের হাতের ধনু বিচিত্র গঠন।
সকল শরীরে দেখে বিষ্ণুর লক্ষণ॥
নারায়ণ রূপ দেখি রাবণ কুমার।
নিশ্চয় জানিল রাম বিষ্ণুর অবতার॥
হাতের ধনুক বাণ ভূতলে ফেলিয়ে।
গজ হতে নামি কহে বিনয় করিয়ে॥
ধরণী লোটায় রহে জুড়ি দুই কর।
অকিঞ্চনে কর দয়া রাম রঘুবর॥
প্রণমহ রামচন্দ্র সংসারের সার।
অগতির গতি তুমি বিষ্ণু অবতার॥

The bow in his hand is of wonderful structure, and in all parts of his body are visible the marks of the great God Visnu. On seeing these signs Virabahu was convinced that Rama was Visnu himself; he threw away the bow from his hand and coming down from his elephant prostrated himself with closed palms before Rama and said in great humility, "I am a poor being, O Lord, have mercy on me. All praise be to thee, O Rama—the refuge of the world. Thou that art truthful and master of thy passions,—an incarnation of Visnu, to Thee I make my obeisance. Thou art the first principle of the universe and in Thee rests the phenomenal world. The Gods of the Trinity form a part of Thee. The Vedas—Sama, Rik, Yajur and Atharva have all originated from Thee, O Lord. It is not in my power to describe thy infinite attributes."

Virabahu's humility.

Tarani Sen, another Raksasa warrior comes with the *tilak* marks and Rama's name stamped all over his body like a true Vaisnava; and even the great Ravana addressed Rama, his foe, with closed palms,* "I have committed endless sins; pardon me, O Lord." This may look odd, but one thing ought to be borne in mind in order to understand the situation. Faith in the incarnation of God was the dominant idea of that age in Bengal. If it were possible for us to realise the psychological condition of a soul who fervently believed that the person before him was God himself,—God who

Tarani & Ravana.

"পুরুষ প্রকৃতি তুমি, তুমি চরাচর।
তোমার একাংশ ব্রহ্মা বিষ্ণু মহেশ্বর॥
সাম ঋক্ যজু অথর্ব্ব তোমা হতে।
অসীম মহিমাগুণ নারি সীমা দিতে॥"

Ramayana by Krittivasa.

* "জন্মিয়া ভারতভূমে আমি দুরাচার।
করেছি পাতক কত সংখ্যা নাহি তার॥
অপরাধ সকল ক্ষম হে দয়াময়॥"

Ramayana by Krittivasa.

created the universe—the all-merciful divinity in human flesh before him—what else could he do than sing his praises in devout worship as Virabahu or Tarani Sen did. In Bengal the peoples' mind at the time was full of the God-man Chaitanya who had passed away like a heavenly vision. Jagai, Madhai, Bhilapantha, and Naroji, great moral wrecks who could not resist the spell of his faith and became converts to the creed of love,—gave shape to the character of the Raksasas of the Ramayana and the old mythology revived by a new touch of living history. The infidels figured as demons, and the battle-field was transformed into the scene of their reformation. The great personality of Chaitanya with his overflowing faith in God figured as the incarnation of Visnu and modelled the Rama of old Valmiki in a new shape. Thus the material of the epic was curiously recast to form a new page of history, and all the incongruities and oddities which may strike us, become clear when we understand why the Ramayana in this garb attracted the people of Bengal,—the change being from a battle-field to the *Sankirtana* ground, from animosity to love, from fiction to reality.

The infidels as Rakasas and Rama as Chaitanya.

In the songs of Uma which form a part of Sakta literature, we find one poet* describing her as going to *gostha* or the meadows to tend the cows. This feature is evidently attributed to her in imitation of Krisna's *gostha*; the tender sentiments of Yasoda are not unoften attributed to Menaka, mother of Uma in the literature of the Saktas.

Vaisnava influence in Sakta and Saiva Literature.

We find the Siva of the Vedas transformed into an altogether different God in the Puranas. New features were added to his character which belonged to Buddha and thus he was represented in a light which satisfied the requirements of a particular period when Buddhistic ideas predominated. This process of continually remodelling the gods in accordance with the demands of particular epochs of Indian religious history, continues up to

* Rama Prasad Sen.

the present day, and it is this genius of the people of Bengal for giving a shape to the hoary gods of the Hindu pantheon suitable to the tastes of the times, that keeps up a perennial flow of inspiration derived from the particular form of religion that may be prevalent at the time. Siva himself takes on the Vaisnava stamp in some of the songs composed in his honour after the advent of Chaitanya Deva. We quote a song below to illustrate this :—

* "Siva losing all consciousness by taking drugs, dances in the company of ghosts. His horn sweetly sounds the name of Krisna. †*Dhustura* flowers adorn his ears; and his eyes have a mad look from taking *Dhustura* drug; his robe of tiger-skin is falling off from him."

This dance of Siva is quite distinct from the destructive dance of the Rudra Deva of the Vedas. The dancing described in this song reminds us rather of the dance of Chaitanya Deva in his spiritual ecstasy. The look of madness, the repeating of Krisna's name, the loose robes,—the company of low-caste people who joined in his processions, as represented by the ghosts of Siva, all significantly point to the Vaisnava influence, without which this dance of Siva becomes meaningless; it is a dance in spiritual ecstasy and should not be confounded with the dance of the destroyer of the universe that Siva originally was. Siva's love for drugs in this song symbolises the excess of emotion verging on madness which characterizes the Vaisnava dance in a *Sankirtana* party.

* "ভাঙ্গে বিভোর ভোলানাথ ভূতগণ সঙ্গে নাচিছে।
হরে রাম হরে রাম মধুর ডুম্বুর বাজিছে।
কর্ণেতে শোভিছে ধুস্তুর ফুল,
ধুস্তুর সেবনে আঁখি ঢুলু ঢুল।
হৈরানে বাঘছাল খসিয়া খসিয়া পড়িছে॥"

An old song of Siva.

† Datura fastuosa.

Thus we see that Vaisnavism influenced the society of Bengal in all its different sections; neither Saktas nor Saivas could resist that influence. The prevailing creeds strengthened themselves by assimilation of the attractive features of their more successful rival, such as has gone on from the beginning in Hindu society.

The apology of the vernacular authors.

During the Puranic renaissance Bengali literature had not yet reached the stage when scholars could undertake writing in that language without some sort of apology. The activities of those who translated Sanskrit works into Bengali were employed in diverse channels, and works of great literary merit and scholarly patience had been already produced in our tongue; but in the vast literature belonging to the Puranic Renaissance we scarcely come across one work in which its author does not refer to a command from a god to undertake a work in Bengali—communicated to him in a dream,—as if the stigma of such a humble undertaking would be removed by attributing it to divine inspiration. The authors of Dharma-Mangal specially are fond of describing such dreams. In one of these the god Dharma is said not only to have directed its author to undertake a Bengali poem in his honour but to have condescended so far as to supply him with the ink, pen and paper for the purpose. The authors seem to have been always in great apprehension of what people might say of their adoption of the popular dialect for writing books; and in their dreams, we feel this throbbing pulse of fear, and an anxiety to prove to their honest, god-fearing and credulous countrymen that they had only acted under heavenly commands, which they were bound to obey.

Vaisnava literature is free from such pretensions. No writer amongst the Vaisnavas refers to dreams. Bengali language was no *patois* to them. The language in which Chaitanya spoke,—in which in yet earlier times Chandidas had written, was sacred in their eyes. Some of the Vaisnava works in Bengali such as the Padamritasamudra by Srinivas Acharyya and Chaitanya-Charitamrita

Bengali,—a sacred dialect to the Vaisnavas.

by Krisna Das Kaviraj have appended to them scholarly Sanskrit annotations, and Narahari Chakravarti in his Bhaktiratnakara quotes Bengali verses from the works of the preceding writers as authority. Bengali was thus raised to the same literary status by the Vaisnavas as the Pali language was by the Buddhists, and no apology is put forward by renowned Sanskrit scholars such as Krisna Das Kaviraj, and Narahari Charavarti, for adopting Bengali as their vehicle in conveying the loftiest thoughts on Vedanta Philosophy and other serious subjects.

The disputes between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas

Bengal was during this period the scene of animated disputes between Saktas and Vaisnavas. The Vaisnavas would not name the *Java* flower because it was the favourite of Kali, the goddess of the Saktas. They called it *od*. The word Kali, which also means ink, they would not use as it was the name of the goddess; they coined the word *sahai* to signify ink. The Saktas, on the other hand, would vilify the Vaisnavas by all means that lay in their power. Narottam Vilas has a passage describing how the Saktas went to Kali's temple and prayed that she might kill the followers of Chaitanya Deva that very night. When the great Narottam Das died, a body of Saktas followed his bier clapping and hissing as a sign of their contempt for the illustrious dead. Here is a satirical poem written by a Sakta poet about the followers of Chaitanya Deva.

A satire against the Vaisnavas.

*What a set of evil-doers has God created in these fools of pretenders who call themselves the followers of Chaitanya! They say, 'O tongue, take the name of Chaitanya,' and this is their prayer. When they name Nityananda they roll in the dust to signify their devotion. In the name of Chaitanya they call upon 36 castes to dine in the same place; and the pariah, the washerman, the

* গৌরাঙ্গ ঠাকুরের ভণ্ড চেঙ্গড়া, যত অকাল কুষ্মাণ্ড নেড়া,
কি আপদ করেছেন সৃষ্টি হরি।
বলে গৌর ডাক রসনা, গৌর মন্ত্রে উপাসনা, নিতাই বলে
নৃত্য করে ধূলায় গড়াগড়ি॥

oilman and the *kotal*, all sit down cheerfully to dinner without observing any distinction of castes. They cannot bear to see a *Vela* leaf or a *Java* flower, the every sight throws them into hysterical fits. If they hear the word Kali uttered by any one they shut their ears with their hands. They pay one rupee and four annas to a Vaisnava priest and marry a widow with children; and in their community a Muhammadan enjoys precedence in regard to caste being regarded as *kulin*! Their prayer is 'Praise be to Krisna, Srinivas, Vidyapati and Nitai Das' and they all have the conceit of being profound scholars. Some of them very learnedly agree that the shrine of Badarika is good for nothing; it is worth a *kachu* (*Arum Colocasia*).

The above satire levels itself at three points of Vaisnavism with which the orthodox community was particularly disgusted; the first is upsetting of the rules of caste, the second is remarriage of widows in the lower ranks of the Vaisnavas; the third is utter disregard for Sastric ordinances, and disownment of the sanctity of shrines.

The Vaisnava singers took the country by surprise by their composition of the *Manohar Sahi* tune. For pathetic chant of tender sentiments and for cadence and soul-stirring effects, the *Manohar Sahi* tune is without

The *Manohar Sahi* tune

গৌর বলে আনন্দে মেতে, একত্র ভোজন ছত্রিশ জেতে
বাগ্দী কোটাল ধোপা কলুতে, একত্র সমস্ত।
বিল্বপত্র জবার ফুল, দেখতে নারেন চক্ষের শূল,
কালী নাম শুনলে কাণে হস্ত॥
কি ভক্তি, কি তপস্বী, জপের মালা সেবাদাসী,
ভজন কুঠরী আইরি কাটের বেড়া।
গোসাঁইকে পাঁচশিকে দিয়ে, ছেলে শুদ্ধ করেন বিয়ে,
জাত্যাংশে কুলীন বড় নেড়া॥
ভজহরি, শ্রীনিবাস, বিদ্যাপতি, নিতাই দাস,
শাস্ত্র ইহাদের অগোচর নাই কিছু।
এক এক জন কিবা বিদ্যাবন্ত, করেন কিবা সিদ্ধান্ত
বদরিকাকে ব্যাখ্যা করেন কচু॥

From a poem by Dasarathi.

its rival in the Indian musical system. As in their ways and views of life the Vaisnavas broke down the conventions of ages and displayed originality and freedom, so in their *kirtana* songs they rejected the time-honoured musical tunes and modes which were so greatly favoured by the leading singers of fashionable society, and introduced a new tune—the *Manohar Sahi*—full of strange modulations, which sounds like a cry from the depths of the soul and appeals to the heart by its tender wail, bringing tears in the eyes of the hearers often without words. This is the tune adopted in the Vaisnava *kirtanas* where the singers' voice set at naught the hard and fast rules of the stereotyped six *Ragas* and thirty six *Raginis* of Indian music and flowed into new forms. It delights the ear and overflows the heart with soft emotions—like the tender wail of the soul of woman uttered in song and expressed in heavenly pathos. The *kirtaniya* or head-singer stands in the midst of his party and describes, for instance, the *Mathur* or the story of Krisna deserting Vrindavan; his voice trembles as a creeper trembles in the breeze, and he paints in words set to music how the trees of the Vrinda groves looked as if they wept, being wet with dews; how being unable to follow Krisna, as their roots were fixed to the soil, they moved with their boughs in the direction of Mathura; how the cows, stood dumb as if they were painted on the air with tears flowing from their eyes, and did not graze;—how the murmurs of the Jumna sounded like a deep anthem that rent the heart. The shepherd-god left for ever the Vrinda groves, reducing it to a scene of desolation and making his loves and games a tragedy of the deepest woe. When the master-singer sings, the musicians of his party stop playing, and other singers wait for the direction of their leader which is often intimated by a wave of the hand; even the sweet violin stops when the master-singer alone holds the audience spell-bound and captivates their souls by singing the *padas* of the old masters. When a particular stage is arrived at he gives a signal and his party catches the

The *Kirtaniya* and his party.

last line of the song and resumes the music. Thus the master-singer with intervals of music in chorus resumes the thread of his tale, stage by stage, and brings to completion the whole episode of a story from the Bhagavata.

The origin of the *kirtana* songs—a brief history.

In a work called Chaitanya-Chandrodaya-Kaumudi written by Prema Das about the year 1715 A.D., it is related that king Pratap Rudra of Orissa was very much moved by the *kirtana* songs sung by the *sankirtana* party of Chaitanya Deva. In reply to a question put by that monarch, Gopi Nath Acharyya told him that *kirtana* songs originated with Chaitanya Deva.

We are not, however, prepared to accept this statement as true. Long before Chaitanya Deva, in the Court of King Laksmana Sen, some favourite tunes of Bengali *kirtana* were adopted for singing the songs of the poet Jaya Deva, and latterly the songs of Chandi Das and Vidyapati began to be sung in some of the best modes of Manohar Sahi *kirtana*. These poets had preceded Chaitanya Deva by nearly a hundred years.

But the *kirtana* songs and some of the popular tunes in which they are sung, were, we believe, of an yet earlier origin. They were started by the singers of the glories of king Mahipal in the 10th century and contributed to by the Buddhist Mahayanists who had already developed the Bhakti-cult. Mahamahopadhyaya Hara Prasad Sastri says on this head, "The songs of Mahipal have already been spoken of. Buddhist songs in Bengal became the fashion of the day. This was, I believe, the beginning of *kirtana* songs. Krisnacharyya or Kahna wrote his celebrated Dohas, his songs and commentaries about this period. There were several writers of Dohas and Sahajiya sect of Buddhism used to sing Buddhist songs in Bengali throughout the country. Lui, Kukkuri, Birna, Gandari, Caitela, Bhusukhu, Kahna, Dombi Mohinta, Saraha, Dheguna, Santi, Bhade, Tandaka, Rantu, Kankana, Jayananda, Dhamma and

Savara sang *kirtana* songs to the willing ears of Bengali peasants and Bengali artisans."*

Though we would thus admit the priority of the claims of the Buddhists regarding the invention of some of the tunes of *kirtana* songs, yet there is no doubt that these were restricted to a very narrow circle of men. The popularity and development of *kirtana* in all its charming forms, especially in the composition of the *Manohar Sahi* tune, belonged undoubtedly to the Vaisnavas. *Manohar Sahi* rapidly attained a luxuriant growth under the fostering attention paid to it by the followers of Chaitanya Deva. So we need not wonder that in the popular notion the credit of originating *kirtana* is ascribed to them.

We shall here proceed to give a brief history of *kirtana* in Bengal.

There are four kinds of *kirtana*: 1. Garan-Hati, 2. Reneti, 3. Mandarani, 4. Manohar Sahi.

The names are taken from those of the places in which particular *kirtanas* originated and flourished. Garan Hat is in the district of Malda, Reneti in Midnapur, Mandaran in Katak and Manohar Sahi is a Pargana in the district of Burdwan.

Manohar Sahi was created by a clever combination of the different tunes of the three other kinds of *kirtana*; it was therefore a later growth. The composition produced a singular melody and thus Manohar Sahi quickly surpassed the rest and caught the popular fancy. The four recognised centres of *Manohar Sahi kirtana* are the villages Kandra and Teora in Burdwan, Maynadala in Birbhum, and Tena in Murshidabad. It is believed that a musician named Ganga Narayan Chakravarti, a Vaisnava of Teora, invented the *Manohar Sahi* by a skilful manipulation of the different tunes in which *kirtana* songs were sung at his time and that latterly Mangal Thakur, a disciple of Chaitanya Deva's companion Gadadhara, contributed to its development and generally improved it.

* Preface to Ramacharita by Sandhyakara Nandi, p. 12.

Here is a list of some of the celebrated singers of Manoharsahi *kirtana* (from the 15th century down to our own times).

1. Ganga Narayana Chakravarti, an inhabitant of Teora (Burdwan)
2. Vadana Chand Thakur
3. Chandra Sekhar Thakur
4. Shamananda Thakur
5. Pulin Chandra Thakur
6. Hari Lal Thakur
7. Vansi Das Thakur

(2–7) of Kandra (Burdwan)

8. Nimai Chakravarti ... of Payer (Birbhum)
9. Haradhan Das
10. Din Dayal Das

(9–10) of Mezeta (Burdwan)

11. Ramananda Mitra
12. Rasik Lal Mitra

(11–12) of Mayna Dala (Birbhum)

13. Vanamali Thakur ... of Kandra (Burdwan)
14. Krisna Kanta Das ... of Panch Thupi (Murshidabad)
15. Damodar Kundu ... of Kandi (Murshidabad)
16. Krisna Hari Hazra
17. Krisna Dayal Chandra

(16–17) of Panchthupi (Murshidabad

18. Ram Banerjea
19. Mahananda Mazumder

(18–19) of Sinhari (Murshidabad)

20. Svarup Lal Thakur ... of Sati (Murshidabad)
21. Vivvarup Goswami ... of Soanipur (Murshidabad)
22. Gopal Das—This singer introduced the fashion now in vogue of adding easy Bengali verses to explain the deeper meaning of the Vaisnava songs, especially those in Brajabuli which is hard for the people to understand. The additions are called *Akhara* (lit. alphabet) in the popular language and Gopal Das was known as "Akharia Gopal" for this innovation ... of Batipur (Murshidabad)
23. Gopal Chakravarti ... of Paraj (Murshidabad)
24. Gopi Babaji ... of Kota (Murshidabad)
25. Nitai Das ... of Tantipara (Birbhum)
26. Nanda Das ... of Maro (Birbhum)
27. Anuragi Das ... of Dakhinkhanda (Murshidabad)
28. Sujan Mallik ... Viranpur (Murshidabad)
29. Krisna Kisore Sarkar ... Kenchotali (Nadia)
30. Rasik Das (living) son of Anuragi Das (No. 27) ... of Dakhinkhanda (Murshidabad)
31. Sudha Krishna Mitra living) ... of Maisadal (Birbhum)
32. Pandit Adwait Das Babaji (living) Kasimbazar
33. Sibu Kirtaniya (living) ... of Kusthia (Nadia)

Of the living *kirtaniyas* three are admittedly superior to the rest. Their names in order of merit may be thus put: 1. Pandit Advait Das Babaji of Kasimbazar. 2. Sivu Kirtaniya of Kusthia. 3. Rasika Das of Dakhinkhanda (Murshidabad).

Sibu Kirtaniya.

I heard three years ago the *kirtana* songs of Sibu Kirtaniya, one of the three great singers mentioned above. He sang one of those celestial songs which are inspired by deep love. Sibu himself was overpowered with

emotion when he described Mathur; his voice with its tender modulations and inimitable wail touched the heart of the audience, as his own heart was touched. We heard the songs in the house of Mr. G. N. Tagore, Calcutta, but the audience felt themselves to be in the Vrinda groves all the while, whither Sibu had translated them, by calling up a perfect vision of the deserted scenes of the shrine.

The singers.

The *kirtana* songs were once a madness in Bengal, and even now they carry great favour with a certain section of our community. The singers are generally acquainted with scholarly Vaisnava works. They commit to memory most of the *padas* of the Vaisnava masters and it is the people of this class who have been supplying the noblest ideas of self-sacrificing love to rural Bengal for more than 350 years.

The *kathakas*.

In a previous chapter I referred to the *kathakas* or professional narrators of stories. It is impossibe to exaggerate the great influence which they wield over the masses. They narrate stories in the vernacular, from the Bhagavata, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata and intersperse their narration with songs which heighten the effect of their description. The deep religious ideas which underlie the stories are discussed at intervals by the *kathaka* and no one can be successful in this profession unless he is endowed with oratory, a sweet voice, and the power of raising tender emotions in the mind of his audience. We can trace the custom of such narration as early as the times of the Ramayana; it may be even earlier; we find Valmiki who lived many thousand years ago refer to a clsss of people whose avocation it was to narrate stories (See Ayodhya kanda, Chap. 69); but the manner in which the modern *kathakas* deliver stories with the object of imparting religious instructions and inspiring devotional sentiments in Bengal is derived from the Vaisnavas. There are formulæ which every *kathaka* has to get by heart,—set passages describing not only Siva, Laksmi, Visnu, Krisna, and other deities, but also describing a town, a battlefield, morn-

Set passages.

ing, noon and night and many other subjects which incidentally occur in the course of the narration of a story. These set passages are composed in Sanskritic Bengali with a remarkable jingle of consonances the effect of which is quite extraordinary. I quote here some of these passages.

Description of a dark night

* "It is the depth of night;—an impenetrable darkness pervades all objects,—the lily droops, and the fragrance of the *kumuda* flower delights us,—the sound of beetles rise from the earth;—the birds are silent for a time and a network of stars is spread over the firmament. The woman who secretly goes to meet her lover is awe-struck in this thick darkness, and, losing her way, stops at every step and proceeds with difficulty; in the deep shade of the forest move the tiger, the bear and other ferocious animals in search of prey. At such quarter of the night, the cries of the jackles break the slumber of lovers who wake for a moment to listen, and again fall asleep in each other's arms."

The descriptions are often highly poetic, and produce almost a pictorial effect on the mind. Thus in the description of noon†

Noon.

"The buffaloes and bears dipping themselves in a pool doze with half-closed eyes," or in that of a cloudy day:—‡ "The eastern sky is radiant with the bow of Indra (the rainbow), it appears as if the god himself comes

* "ঘোরা যামিনী, নিবিড় গাঢ় তমস্বিনী, শান্তা নলিনী কুমুদগন্ধামোদিনী, পৃথ্বী ঝিল্লিরবোন্মাদিনী, বিহগরবক্ষণবিধ্বংসিনী নক্ষত্রনিকরজালমালব্যাপ্তা যামিনী, সত্বরচকিতনয়না কামিনী মনোনায়ক নিকটাভিসারিকা নায়িকাগণ ক্ষণ ক্ষণ দিগ্‌ভ্রান্তাদিজন্ত স্খলিত চকিত গতি কষ্টে স্বষ্টে গমন করিতেছেন। ব্যাঘ্র, ভল্লুক ভয়ানক জন্তু সমূহ ভোজনার্থে গমন করিতেছে। প্রতি যামে যামে জাগ্রতভট ঘোর কঠোর চীৎকার ধ্বনি প্রবোধিত কান্তাকান্ত প্রবেশিত হৃদয় সঙ্কোচিত ভঙ্গ বিভঙ্গ দ্বারা গাঢ়ালিঙ্গনে মনোহরণপূর্ব্বক পুনর্নিদ্রাবিষ্ট হইতেছেন।"

† "কিবা কিঞ্চিন্মুদ্রিতনয়ন মহিষ বরাহ পবল নিময়"

‡ পূর্ব্বদিগম্বর দেদীপ্যমান, শক্রধনুশোভিত নভোমণ্ডল, কাদম্বিনী সৌদামিনী চঞ্চল, তদ্দর্শনোদ্বেজিতান্তঃকরণ মত্তকরীবরারোহণকৃতদেবেন্দ্র নিজায়ুধবজ্রনিক্ষেপশঙ্কিত ইরম্মদস্খলিত

A cloudy day

riding on his elephant—the clouds, and twanging his great bow. A shooting light dazzles the eye as his thunder falls, the storm roars and the terrible sound frightens the traveller,—the birds in great alarm flock around the trees and raise a confused chatter," and in similar descriptions pictures of Indian scenes with which we are all familiar are instantly recalled to the mind.

But the descriptions of gods by far excel the rest and possess a peculiar charm with the Hindus. The words are so cleverly strung together as to create visions of sublimity and beauty by association.

I have a book of formulae supplied to me by a *kathaka*, in which I find set passages on the following subjects :—

1. A city. 2. Noon day. 3. Morning. 4. Night. 5. A cloudy day. 6. Woman's beauty. 7. The sage Narada. 8. Visnu. 9. Rama. 10. Laksmana. 11. Siva. 12. Kali. 13. Sarasvati. 14. Laksmi. 15. A forest. 16. War. 17. Bhagavati.

Curiously enough these set passages though written in a highly artistic and poetic style are in prose and they are sung as if they were songs. The effect is not at all marred by the prose-forms in which they are couched. Being set to a chant, they sound highly poetic and do not at all jar on the ear.

I shall here attempt at giving a short history of some of the most illustrious *kathakas*.

A short history of the *kathakas*

We have not been able to gather much information on this head. We, however, know that Ramdhan Siromani was one of those princes amongst *kathakas* who could move the audience as they liked, so much so that occasionally enormous amounts of money were paid as gifts to him by rich parties who became spell-bound, as it were, by the power of his brilliant oration. He was an inhabitant of the village Sonamukhi in the district of Burdwan. He lived about 150 years ago. Gadadhar Siromani was his worthy

পতিতকণা সমুদ্র গর্জ্জিত বজ্রপতন ভয়ানকধ্বনিপ্রতিধ্বনিশ্রবণ সভয় চকিত নয়নোদ্বেজিত পাদ্বজন পক্ষিগণগণিতপ্রমাদ সঙ্কটত্রাসিত একাকীন কুহু কুহু কলরব করিতেছে।"

contemporary and was an inhabitant of Gobardanga. Dharani Kathaka, a nephew of Ramdhan Siromani, wielded an extraordinary influence over the masses, and especially over the womenfolk of Bengal, half a century ago. It is said that he was so extraordinarily gifted, that from tragic tales which drew forth profuse tears from the audience, he could suddenly pass on to satire and comic subjects making the whole house burst into peals of laughter before the tears had dried in their eyes. Krishna Mohan Siromani of Kodalia in 24-Parganas was his great rival. Another *kathaka* of great renown who lived about this time was Sridhar Pathaka who contributed a large number of songs to the literature of *Kathakata*.

To-day Ksetra Nath Churamani of Bagbazar, enjoys the esteem and admiration of a large section of the Hindu community of Bengal. As a story-teller there is no *kathaka* now living that can approach him. His songs and highly poetic descriptions call up vivid pictures before the mind. Krisna Kathaka of Shampukur is a person of superior scholarship but as narrator of story he stands below Ksetra Churamani.

The *kathakas* of the old school were scholars, poets, and finished singers. The effect which their narration produced was wonderful. Born story-tellers as they were, their oration was coupled with power of music, the effect of all which was heightened by their command over language and their great scholarship. All this made them the most popular figures in Bengali-society and it is impossible to describe the hold which they had upon the women of our country. When their day's work was done, they would hasten in the evenings to hear the stories narrated by *kathakas* at the house of some one who was generally a man of means and of religious temperament. The stories inspired the minds of women by instances of the lofty sacrifice the Hindu wives have made for the sake of virtue, chastity and faith. In the case of great and illustrious *kathakas* noticed above, they paid little heed to the stereotyped passages in their description. They

Their extraordinary influence.

composed songs *extempore* and sang them according to the requirements of their story.

As I have said, it was the Vaisnavas to whom the *kathas* or stories owe the elegant form in which we at present find them. The Vaisnava *Gosvamis* or priests have up to the present day the monopoly of this profession. I shall here briefly narrate a story told by the Vaisnava *kathakas* to show the kind of moral and spiritual instruction which it is the aim of the *kathakas* to imprint on the minds of their audience which chiefly consist of the women-folk.

The story of Dhara and Drona

Dhara and Drona.

Pariksit asked what were the meritorious acts performed by Yasoda, the mother of Krisna, for which the Lord of the universe condescended to become her son.

Suka Deva said in answer :—

At one time Siva and Visnu wanted to test the devotional feeling of their followers on the earth. Durga, the wife of Siva, accompanied them.

The gods in disguise.

They came down on the earth in disguise :—Visnu as a young man apparently very poor, Siva as an old man bending under the burden of four-score years, and Durga as an old woman stricken with age and disease.

A *Sresthi*.

They came to a village where a certain *Sresthi* (merchant) was known for his great faith in the Saiva religion. He was a money-lender and had amassed immense wealth by this avocation. It was noonday when no Hindu, however poor, would turn a guest away from his door if he wanted food. Visnu entered the house when the money-lender was negotiating with a customer as to the percentage of interest on a certain loan. The god applied to him for help saying that his father and mother both old and decrepit, were

stricken with hunger, and wanted shelter and food at his house for the day. The *sresthi* looked at him, and, without replying, went on talking on his business, till it was high time for dinner and he rose to leave. Visnu now again asked him if he could give three persons food and shelter for the day. The *sresthi* did not deign to give any reply even to this, but as he passed into the inner appartments, dismissing all his men, he replied briefly saying that it was now high time to worship Siva, before which he never tasted any food,—so it was a sin on his part to detain him by requests of a secular nature. Visnu came back to Siva and related the story to him and to Durga, and they were both greatly mortified at this conduct of one whom they had believed to be a pious man and their devout follower.

Through a dense wood.

Visnu now led them to the western extremity of that village; it was afternoon, a dense wood lay before them, the trees of which glistened with the light of the western horizon; the *champaka* and *atasi* flowers peeped through small vistas, lying hidden in the shade of large *asvatha* and *simula* trees which abounded there. There they espied a small hut, a straw-roofed mud-hovel, very neat and pleasant to look upon, lying in a sort of woody covert,—unwilling as it were from shyness to show itself to men.

A damsel of sixteen.

Vishnu led them on to the hut,—through a jungly path wreathed with flowering plants that could not all have grown there naturally; some tender hand must have tended them as appeared from the wet ground underneath proving the care with which they were watered. As they came to the door of the hut they saw a damsel of sixteen eyeing them with a look of curiosity. She was poorly dressed in a single *sari* not long enough to cover her decently. Her profuse black hair fell in luxuriant curls down her back; she was beautiful as a goddess, with timid eyes and a countenance the purity of which was like that one finds in a jessamine flower when it first opens its petals. She had a vermilion-mark on her forehead and a piece of thread was tied round her left wrist, both indicative of the

sacred vows of wifehood. She came and though of a shy and quiet nature she was free from that excess of coyness which generally marks the Hindu wife. She asked in a soft murmuring tone as to what the young man wanted. Visnu said what he had said to the *sresthi*; he wanted food and shelter for three persons for the day. The woman replied, "My husband has gone out to beg alms and will return presently; in the meantime kindly wait here." "But where can we stop ? You have a single hut and no seats, no articles even of every-day use. What have you to offer for our comfort, fatigued and worn out as we all are, specially my old parents?" She showed a great anxiety to please and said, "O sirs, if at this late hour of the day, you go away from my doors without tasting any food, all my virtue will be lost. I am poor, but I crave your indulgence; pray wait here, my husband will be back quickly."

She had no metal plate or any other article of every-day use. The leaves of *sala* trees gathered from the wood served as plate for the poor husband and wife, and they also made cups of those leaves for drinking water. Visnu and the other two deities sat down in the hut and the old people looked exhausted and fatigued, unable to speak as if their last hour had come. Visnu said, "Look madam ! My parents will shortly die as appear from their condition. You are a very poor woman; if death occurs in this hut, it will put you to great inconvenience and trouble; allow us to depart, I will carry them on my shoulders and seek another place." The damsel softly said, "Dear sirs, stay here, it would be a greater sin to send away dying men from my house. What may befall me I don't care; but my present duty I cannot avoid; the rest is in the hands of one who owns this house." Asked Visnu in wonder: "You said it was your husband who lived with you here; what other owner of the house is there ?" She replied, "My husband has told me that Visnu, the Lord of the universe, is the owner of this house, as indeed he is of everything we see. We are here to carry out

"My parents will shortly die."

Visnu—the master of the house.

the wishes of the master and have no idea of our own happiness or misery." Visnu said, "Have you not up till now taken any food? It is a late hour.' She replied: "My husband has gone to beg for alms, he will bring what Providence may grant. I shall cook the food and offer it to Visnu first; then we shall reserve a portion for any guest that may visit our house, and what remains my husband will partake of and I shall eat what may be left in his plate." "So late an hour in the day and no food! Don't you feel hungry?" She only smiled sweetly at the query without saying anything. It was nearly evening and the husband had not yet returned. Visnu seemed to grow impatient and said that by detaining them in the place she was practically starving his dying parents to death. At these words the eyes of the damsel grew tearful; with the leaves of *sala* trees formed into a sort of cup she brought a little water for them and poured it on their parched lips and looked at them with such an affectionate tenderness as seemed to soothe their very hearts and would have had a healing effect on them if they had really been what they seemed to be. Visnu said, "It is evening now, I can stay no longer. I must go away with my parents." She fell at the feet of Visnu and said, "Brahmin, my vow of serving guests is going to be broken; if you would kindly help me to be true to it, wait a moment; not far off is the shop of the grain-seller; I will go to it though I never did so before, and will come presently back with articles of food. I am sure the grocer knows my husband and will give me credit." She went to the shop through mazy paths, through briers and flowers,

To the grocer's shop.

like a silvan goddess. Her curling hair fell down to her waist; she wore no ornaments save a rosary round her arms, but her youthful charms did not want any artificial help; they fascinated the eyes that looked upon her; she was innocent and full of piety and did not know the wicked ways of the world. When she arrived at the shop, the grocer was struck with her beauty, all the people assembled there felt the charm of her presence, and the man asked her what it was that she wanted. She said "My name is Dhara; my husband is the ascetic

Brahmin who comes to your shop to purchase food every day." "You mean to say that you are the wife of Drona, that poor pious Brahmin. I never saw you before, nor knew that you were so beautiful.' Dhara said, "I have guests at my house. If you kindly help me by giving me grain on credit, with *ghee* and fuel, my husband will pay the bill. I have no money." 'O yes, you have much with you to pay me. I hope you will not deprive me of what you have,'—said the grocer in a low tone. Dhara—a sincere soul—who knew no sin, wonderingly said, "What have I got to repay you with ?" "Promise that you will pay me what you have," added the man in a soft tone. In her eagerness to serve her guests, the innocent and pure-hearted Dhara gave the promise. The shop-keeper dismissed his other customers and gave a sufficient quantity of food-grains, *ghee* and fuel for the three guests and put them into a basket. He said, "Now is your time to pay before you leave." Dhara rejoined that she did not know what she had to pay and wonderingly asked him to tell it. The wicked man said, "I want only a touch of your rising breasts." Dhara stood silent for a moment, thinking of the promise she had given, which was inviolable. All of a sudden she seized a sharp knife that lay in a corner and with that cut her breasts off and bleeding profusely presented them to the shopkeeper, who swooned at the sight. She now lifted the basket of food on her head bleeding all the way and came to her hut. Visnu came out and was horror-struck at the sight. The disguised deities all hastened to the door, and asked what had occurred to cause that heart-rending sight. She said, "Revered guests, prepare your food and help a poor woman to be true to her vows. I have prayed to Visnu night and day that my vows of purity and unswerving truth to God and man might be preserved all through my life, and I am glad that even at the cost of life I am able to be true to them" Visnu knew what the matter was, and Durga suddenly assumed her heavenly form wielding the celestial trident, her head resplendant with a

The promise n violable.

The great sacrifice and the boon.

halo of light, and was about to proceed to kill the wicked man, but Siva stopped her. Visnu said, "You are bleeding to death for the sake of your guests. Take my blessings. In your next life you will be called Yasoda and I shall incarnate myself as Krisna and suck the breasts which you did not really present to that wicked man, but to God as offering for the sake of truth." Siva, who had by this time assumed his divine form, looking like a mount of silver—with his matted locks through which the stream of the Ganges flowed, said, "And I shall protect the Vrinda groves when Krisna will be incarnated there." Said Durga, "I shall be Yogamaya, the presiding deity of Gokul where Krisna will play the shepherd-boy and preserve the milkmen and their cattle." And they all said, "Blessed be thou, for thou hast lived a pure life and known how to die for truth and for services of men."

Such are some of the stories related by *kathakas* which, with their songs and interpretation of Sanskrit texts, produce a wonderful effect on the masses. As I have said before, a story like that of Dhara and Drona ordinarily takes five hours in narrating; I have given only the gist of it. It is impossible for me to give any idea of the effect produced by working it up into detail as the *kathakas* do.

The story takes five hours.

The *kathakas* invariably begin with a preliminary invocation of Krisna. The text from the Bhagavata on which they base this is poetical. They begin thus :—'Where Krisna's name is uttered the place becomes sacred. All the shrines of the world,—the Naimisaranya, Prayag, Benares, and Gaya meet at that place; the sacred streams of the Ganges, the Kaveri, the Krisna, the Tapti, and the Godavari flow at that place where Krisna's name is recited.' This is a poetical way of expressing the idea of the Vaisnavas that a simple prayer is more efficacious than visiting all shrines, and that if God is worshipped in the soul, the sacredness of all earthly shrines attends it in the act.

The preliminary portion.

The influence of Vaisnavism materially helped the spread of education amongst the masses. We often find people of the lower ranks of society reputed for scholarship. Syamananda belonged to the Sadgopa or farming caste. But he was a great scholar in Sanskrit Grammar. The social life depicted in the old Bengali poems of this period shows that learning was no longer confined to the Brahmins. Mukundaram's account of the merchant Sripati who is said to have taken a delight in Sanskrit poetry and drama and his description of the education given to his son Srimanta who in his early years read Bharavi, Magha, Kumara-Sambhava and other masterpieces of Sanskrit poetry, show that Sanskrit learning was no longer the monopoly of the Brahmins. In the *tols* established by Vaisnavas, pupils from all ranks of society had free access. In an account of the education given to Dhanapati in his boyhood we find that though he belonged to the Bania caste, he had already learned to talk in Sanskrit and was well acquainted with the Devanagari characters. In the descriptions given by Mukundaram who vividly portrays every detail of social life in Bengal in the 16th century, we find the women of the lower castes receiving a fair education, not to speak of those who belonged to the higher castes. Khullana read the forged letter produced by Lahana and expressed her disbelief in its genuineness as it was not in the handwriting of her husband.

The mass-education.

Bengali in the 16th century, outside the pale of the Vaisnava community, was mainly read by the people of the lower ranks of society. A large portion of old Bengali manuscripts written in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries were recovered by me from the houses of the people of the lowest castes. The *bhadraloks* or the gentlemanly classes were generally interested in Sanskrit manuscripts. But I have found old Bengali manuscripts, preserved with almost religious care by the illiterate rustic people,—handed down to them by their ancestors. This proves that their ancestors could read and write Bengali though owing to the decadence of Vaisnava

The rustic people preserved Bengali Mss.

influence, one of the aims of which was to enlighten the masses, these people had sunk into ignorance once again. Many of the Mss. brought to light by me were written by people of lower castes. Some of the writers seem to have been expert in the art of calligraphy. I name below some of the writers of this class who wrote particularly elegant hands.

1. Harivamsa copied by Bhagyavanta Dhubi (washerman) in 1783 A.D.

2. Naisadha copied by Sri Majhee Kait (a low *sudra*) in 1749 A.D.

3. Devajani Upakhyana by Ganga Das Sen copied by Ram Narayan Gope (a milkman) in 1747 A. D.

4. Kriya Yoga Sara copied by Kali Charan Gope (a milkman) in 1740 A. D.

5. Dandi Parva by Raja Narayan Datta copied by Sri Ram Prasad Dei (a low sudra) in 1785 A.D.

In the houses of Vaisnava scholars, however, we find such Bengali works as the Chaitanya-Charitamrita, Chaitanya-Bhagavata, and Padakalpataru carefully preserved side by side with classical Sanskrit works. In their eyes Bengali works dealing with Vaisnavism were not, as I have said, a whit less important than the most sacred theological books in Sanskrit.

Bengali in the Vaisnava period was subject to the influence of Hindi and this I have already mentioned on page 337. Many of the great masters of the Vaisnava faith lived in Vrindavan and there was a constant exchange of ideas between the people of that place and those of Bengal. This circumstance explains why we find such a large number of Hindi words imported into the Bengali writings of the Vaisnavas. The *Padakartas* held Vidyapati's songs in great admiration and as a result many of them imitated the Maithil forms in their *padas* and the Brajabuli of the Vaisnava-songs is a result of this imitation. Thirdly, in their attempts to propagate the creed of Vaisnavism all over India, the Vaisnavas came in contact with the different races of India speaking different

The influence of Hindi.

languages. Hindi had already grown to be the *lingua franca* of all India united under the suzerain power of the Muslim Emperor of Delhi. Those who had the propaganda of their faith to carry to all Indians could not help having recourse to the most convenient vehicle already available for approaching them. The Vaisnavas imported a large number of Hindi words into their works to make them intelligible to the people of all parts of India.

Owing to these causes the works written by a large number of Vaisnavas are more or less influenced by Hindi, and instances of যৈছে, কৈছে, কবহুঁ, তবহুঁ, দুহুঁ, হইলুঁ কাঁহা, তাঁহা, অবক, বিছুরিল, etc., are numerous in all Vaisnava writings, not to speak of Brajabuli which is a thoroughly Hindi-ized form of Bengali.

Case-endings.

The signs of the case-endings that we meet with in the works mentioned in this chapter, show varied forms and are very much like what we have dealt with in foregoing chapters. The growing tendency to use the suffix আদি in the place of গণ, সব, সকল and other words, formerly used to denote the plural number, often coupled with a pleonastic ক, as in চণ্ডালাদিক, পাককর্ত্তাদিক, etc.,—found in *Narottom-Vilas* and other works—indicates the development of the form দিগ which now makes the case-ending in Bengali that denotes the plural number.

The metres.

The metres used by the Vaisnava-masters, though rich in their forms, do not conform to the stereotyped ways of early metrical styles called Payara and Tripadi *chhandas* which were carried to perfection by writers with a rigid classical taste. In the *Manik Chandra Rajar Gan* and other writings of the Buddhistic period, we find the Payara *chhanda* to be far from being restricted to 14 letters as it latterly became; the latitude taken by the earliest writers in sometimes dragging the lines to a tiresome length, and not unoften shortening them to abrupt and halting rhymes, were the result of ignorance and uncultured taste. In the Vaisnava writings, however, we find a freedom from the rigidness of classical models—not to be mistaken for the inartistic and unrestrained excesses of

the vulgar, but which is prompted by a superior poetic faculty, conscious of its art, making light of restrictions, though keenly alive to the natural rhythm of metre and expression. In the following lines the poet overrides Payara *chhanda* sportively and shows that by freeing himself from the trammels of a stereotyped metre, he makes the lines more rhythmical and artistic.

" জয় জয় দেব-কবি নৃপতি-শিরোমণি বিদ্যাপতি রসধাম।
জয় জয় চণ্ডীদাস রসশেখর অখিল ভুবনে অনুপাম॥"

"Praise be to Jayadeva, the brightest jewel of the princes of poetry; praise be to Vidyapati, a store-house of elegant sentiments, and praise be to Chandidas, the highest pinnacle of delicate feeling,—who is peerless in the world."

The poetic licence.

The poet who wrote these lines was well-versed in the Sanskrit classics, as the very expressions he uses, prove; yet he uses অনুপাম which is not the right word,—it should have been অনুপম. The poet knew this quite well, but took the poetic licence of using it, for the purpose of making this word rhyme more elegantly with ধাম of the previous line. Here lies the difference between Vaisnava writers and those who are the exponents of the Puranic Renaissance in Bengali. These insisted on the Sanskritic rules without compromise, whereas the Vaisnava poets, often the better Sanskrit scholars of the two, would follow their own keen perception of happy expression and brook no rules laid down by scholars and purists. As in the *Payara chhanda*, so also in our familiar *Tripadi*, they introduced innovations, yielding to the perception of elegance so natural with them. In the latter *chhanda* the first half of a line generally rhymes with the other half and the second line rhymes with the fourth; but here are some verses in the *Tripadi* by a Vaisnava poet, in which one half of the first line does not rhyme with the other, and yet the elegance of the metre does not at all suffer.

" আমার অঙ্গের বরণ লাগিয়া, পীতবাস পরে শ্যাম।
প্রাণের অধিক, করের মুরলী, লইতে আমার নাম॥

আমার অঙ্গের বরণ-সৌরভ, যখন যে দিকে পায়।
বাহু পাসরিয়া, বাউল হইয়া, তখন সেদিকে যায়।"

(He wears cloths of a yellow tint because they are like me in colour, and as the flute that he carries in his hand, sings my name, he holds it dearer than his life. Whenever he comes across a colour or a scent that reminds him of me, he moves forward like a mad man with his arms out-stretched.)

Various metres were invented by the Vaisnavas which please the ear, though they do not conform to the style already adopted in Bengali composition. Here is an example of long and short lines rhyming with each other and producing a singularly happy effect by their deviation from ordinary metre :—

"ধনি রঙ্গিণী রাই।
বিলসহি হরি সঞে রস অবগাহই॥
হরি সুন্দর মুখে।
তাম্বুল দেই চুম্বই নিজ সুখে॥
ধনি রঙ্গিণী ভোর।
ভুলল গৌরবে কানু করি কোর॥
দুহুঁ দুহুঁ গুণ গায়।
একই মুরলীরন্ধ্রে দুজনে বাজায়॥
কেহ কেহ কহে মৃদু ভাষ।
নারীপরশে অবশ পীতবাস॥
কেহ কাড়ি লয় বেণু।
রাসে রসে আজ ভুলল কানু॥"

(The lovely Radha, steeped in sweet emotions, sports with Krishna. She puts sweet betels into his mouth and kisses him. She puts her arms about him in the delight of her heart. They praise each other with sweetest words and play together on the same flute. Some of the maidens whisper softly "how charmed is Krishna by his lady's touch!" Others snatch away his flute by force. Krishna is lost in the pleasure wrought by the company of the milk-maids.)

I give below a list of obsolete words, with their meaning from the works dealt with in this chapter.

A list of obsolete words and their meaning.

দৃঢ়—to prove : to cure.
ঠাকুরাল—authority and power.
ছিণ্ডে—to tear.
সমুচ্চয়—number.
বহি—without.
বিরক্ত—one who has an ascetic temper of mind.
উপস্থান—presence.
পরিহার—humble solicitations.
উপস্কার—to clean.
সম্ভার—materials.
আর্ধ্য—highly honoured : of an angry temperament.
উপপন্ন—to originate from.
পরতেক—visible.
বাহ্য—consciousness of the outer world.
জুয়ায়—to be fit.
নিছনি—to wipe away : that which is thrown away as of no value.
চেষ্টা—a fervour of devotional feelings.
কদর্থেন—to cut jokes.
ভিতে—to a particular direction.
ভাবক—emotional.
ব্যবসায়—conduct.
প্রাকৃত—ordinary.
বিমরিষ—sorry.
উদার—anxious.
প্রচণ্ড—great (as প্রচণ্ড অনুগ্রহ).
সম্পত্তি—flourishing condition.
লঙ্ঘন—to bite.
চালেন—to provoke.
কতি—where.
আত্মসাৎ—to accept as a disciple : to admit as a kindred.

আখুরিয়া—one expert in calligraphy; one who interprets the *padas* by simple words of his own, while singing *kirtan* songs.

হাতসানি—to sign by hand.

লঘু—small (as লঘু পদচিহ্ন).

পাতনা—chaff.

ওলাহন—to rebuke.

ভদ্রকর—to have oneself shaved.

রাতা—red.

বাউল—mad.

পিছলিতে—to turn away.

বুলে—to wander about.

প্রেমা—love.

সিনেহ—affection.

উচাট—anxious.

তোকানি মোকানি—rumour.

উমতি—mad.

সানাসানি—to make signs.

নিবড়িল—completed.

বহুয়াড়ি—wife.

সায়—finish.

বেদিনী—a female sympathiser

আর্ত্তি—solicitude.

আউটিয়া—to move with a rod.

তাড়াকুর—an ear-ornament.

দাদুর—a frog.

টোটা—a garden.

সম্বাহন—to shampoo: to serve.

ওট—lips.

মঅঙ্ক—(from মৃগাঙ্ক) the dark spot on the moon.

The pretenders.

During the Vaisnava period two persons, envious of the great esteem in which Chaitanya was held, declared themselves to be incarnations of Visnu and tried to practise deception on credulous rustics. Both of them lived 400 years ago, and we find them

mentioned in the Chaitanya-Bhagavata and other works with great contempt. One was a Brahmin—a native of Eastern Bengal; his name was Madhab and Kavindra was his title; Kavindra literally means a prince of poets, but the Vaisnavas called him Kapindra or a prince of monkies. The other one who was also a Brahmin belonged of Western Bengal (রাঢ় দেশ); his name is not given, but his family title was Mallik. This man called himself an incarnation of Visnu and the Vaisnavas gave him the title of Fox. Both in Bhaktiratnakara and in Chaitanya-Bhagavata we find many contemptuous epithets bestowed on these two men. We have besides seen a number of Sanskrit verses in which some details are given about them.

The decadence of the nobler elements.

The Vaisnava community gradually grew larger. Lay men recruited from the lowest castes formed the largest portion of this community. Fallen women and Pariahs swelled its ranks and the result was that the allegory of Radha and Krisna was made an excuse for the practice of many immoralities. Chaitanya Deva did not himself organise this community, as I have said; those, who did so, kept up its purity during their life-time; but it gradually sank into ignorance and corruption. Not only Chaitanya Deva but all his companions also were deified and the catholicity of views that had characterised them became a thing of the past. People came forward to prove that Haridas (a Muhammadan) was really a Brahmin as if none but a Brahmin could be accepted as a leader even in Vaisnava society. The Vaidya and Kayastha leaders of that society who once counted Brahmin disciples by hundreds gradually lost much of the esteem in which they had been held because of their having belonged to castes lower than that of the Brahmins, and at the present day there is no Kayastha *gosvami* or priest in the Vaisnava community, who can claim a Brahmin disciple. The only caste next to the Brahmins that still claims Brahmin disciples, is the Vaidya, and the descendants of Narahari Sarkar of Srikhanda have a considerable following of Brahmin disciples

up till now, though their number has greatly fallen off. Thus do we find Hindu society to be almost proof against any attempt to break down the Brahmanical caste-system.

The Hindu Society asserts itself.

Hindu society has often been seen to yield for a time to the inspired efforts of a great genius to level all ranks, but, as often, it has been found to reassert itself when the new order, after its brief hey-day of glory, gradually succumbs to the power of older institutions. Buddhism, Vaisnavism and even Brahmanism, all of which began with an ideal of all-embracing love seem each in turn to have lost its hold upon the masses gradually. There is an inherent power in the social organisation of Hinduism,—the power to draw from all faiths and nourish itself on the best elements of other creeds. Each religion that comes in contact with it, prevails so long as a genius acts in its suppport, but when such inspired help is gone, it finds that its strongest points have all passed over to the other side leaving it incapable of coping with the resources of the older institution. But though much of the influence of Vaisnavism has been lost in course of time, yet it retains a considerable hold upon the masses.

The Vaisnava influence.

Widow marriage and a disregard of the hard and fast rule laid down in the Hindu *sastras* characterise the lay Vaisnava community, and the Vaisnavas still preach the doctrines of their faith with great earnestness in backward villages. The whole atmosphere of Bengal resounds at the present day with songs, recitations and the tales told by the *kathakas* and the *kirtan-wallas* who belong to that community. These influences also invigorate Hindu society as a whole by awakening its spiritual consciousness and it is no longer at war with the daughter-creed.

From the incidental descriptions found in various old Bengali works we find that during the Hindu period not only the merchant-class, but even the rustic folk, enjoyed great material prosperity. In *Manik Chandra Rajar Gan* we find that even the children of villagers used to

Material prosperity.

play with golden balls (সোনার ভাটা) and that even a maid-servant would not touch a cotton *sari*, but wore silk. An ordinary merchant's dinner was not complete without fifty different dishes with the rice, besides a number of preparations of sweets. The tradition of fifty different dishes is still familiar in every respectable Hindu household and old ladies may even now be found who know the art of preparing them. The Vaisnavas, as I have said, never touched meat or fish, but in the preparation of vegetables and sweets they were past masters. Lists of the delicious dishes prepared by them are to be found in Chaitanya-Charitamrita (Madhya khanda, 3rd and 15th chapters), in 2498th *pada* of the Padakalpataru, and in Jayananda's Chaitanya-Mangala and other works. Details of the preparation of meat and vegetable curries with fish are to be found in Daker Vachana, Kavi Kankan Chandi and in nearly all works of Dharmamangal.

We have also descriptions of gold plate being profusely used by rich men. They used to sleep on couches made of pure gold, and when they would sit on these they would rest their feet on silver foot-stools. In the old stories and folk-lore we find references to such fine cloth that when exposed to the dew on the grass, it would scarcely be seen. The *Meghadumbura sari*, made of an exceedingly fine stuff, was a passion of the women of the upper classes.

The cheap living and poverty.

This is only one side of the picture. In Muhammadan times the condition of the lower classes seem to have been deplorable. No description of distress and want can be more pathetic than the account which Phullara gives of herself. For want of a cup, liquid food had to be stored up in a hole dug in the earth, and often a day and a night were passed without any food. The poor were not infrequently subjected to capricious treatment from the rich. Many of the large tanks which were dug in Bengal at the time, seem to have been the work of forced labour. The custom of employing men by force without wages, which was called বেগার খাটান, was very prevalent. Living was remarkably

cheap and wants were few. Now-a-days no rustic in Bengal, however poor he may be, can help spending less than Rs. 100 for a marriage ceremony. There is a list of the expenditure incurred on that account by a poor man, 300 years ago.

Marriage expenses

	Price
Two *dharas* or cloths for the bridegroom ...	3 pies
Betels	1 cowrie (less than a pie)
Catechu	1 ,, ,,
Lime	½ ,, ,,
Khuna (a cotton *sari* for the bride) ...	4½ cowries (a little more than 2 pies)
Total ...	13 cowries (a little more than half an anna).

This list we find in Chandikavya by Madhavacharyya, written in 1579 A.D. Of course the value of articles in our present day has greatly increased, but yet the items mentioned in this list would not cost more than Rs. 5 even now, and comparing this with the lavish expenditure now-a-days incurred even by rustic-folk in marriage, we must admit that the economical Hindu of yore has imbibed extravagant ideas about living with which they were once perfectly unfamiliar, and from the standpoint of the Hindus, expensive living is no indication of civilisation. At the marriage of Chaitanya a second time, Buddhimanta Khan, who managed the ceremony, said* "Brothers, hear me, in this affair there will be none of that stinginess which characterises most of the ceremonies of the Brahmins. We shall do things in such a manner that people may say it is the marriage of a prince." Yet the matter was one of the simplest kind. Sandal perfumes and betels, with garlands of flowers were freely distributed. There was no dinner; no

* "বুদ্ধিমন্ত খান্ বলে শুন সর্ব্ব ভাই।
বাবুনিয়া মত কিছু এ বিবাহে নাই॥
এ বিবাহ পণ্ডিতের করাইব হেন।
রাজকুমারের মত লোকে বলে যেন॥
Chaitanya Bhagavata

nautch; no illumination; no dowry. It is related in the Chaitanya-Bhagavata that this distribution of sandal-perfume, betels, etc., cost an amount of money out of which five ordinary marriages could have been celebrated! Yet the expenses calculated by the present value of money could hardly have exceeded Rs. 50. Compared with the present expenditure on marriages this was insignificant. For now-a-days no gentleman in Bengal can manage a marriage for less than Rs. 500 and a marriage of a pompous description must cost fifty times this amount. But I doubt if the present state of things mean any improvement in the material condition of the people; it should rather be taken as the result of extravagant ideas about style of living and display which are threatening to prove disastrous to us.

The merchants

The merchant-classes, occupying an inferior position in society in spite of their great wealth in Bengal, were lavish in expenditure on the occasion of marriage and other festivals in those days. The description of the marriage of Laksmindra with Behula in *Manasar Bhasan* discloses a pomp and grandeur which far exceeds anything of the kind found in the modern festivities of our rich people. The profuse display of jewellery, of gold and silver plate, the noble procession of elephants and horses all glittering with gold-saddles and ensigns, and the rich dowries carried by thousands of men, valuable diadems sparkling from the turbans of the gay companions of the bridegroom, and rich illumination—all indicate the vast resources that were at the command of the merchants of that period. But this idea of pomp and extravagance in living was not the highest ideal of Hindu society. The merchants, as has been already said, ranked low in the social scale in spite of their great riches, and the poor pious Brahmins were the true leaders of society. The people wanted to follow the Brahmins in their utter disregard of all materialistic considerations and in their devotion to God.

The Mahotsava.

Vaisnavas were generally frugal in their living. The *Mahotsava* of the Vaisnavas was the only ceremony in which they would sometimes spend all the

money they had accumulated, by their life-long labour. It is a noble ceremony the like of which is not found outside the pale of India and which had its origin probably in the Buddhistic idea of all-embracing charity. As in other institutions of the Vaisnavas, so also in this they probably imitated the Buddhists. Sometimes for a whole month a man of ordinary means kept his gates open to the poor and hundreds of them came from all parts of the country,—poor, famished, half-starved people who had their fill sitting there in long rows without any distinction of caste or creed. It is never a rich dinner, the fare being always exceedingly simple. But it is not for a limited number of invited people;—it is for all—all who are driven to it by hunger. It may be called a feast for the uninvited,—for those whom no one calls and all would turn away, who have no status in society and who in their torn rags are generally unwelcome visitors; the owner of the house who holds the *Mahotsava* ceremony himself serves as far as practicable the beggars, who flock daily to his house in thousands. No invitation is issued, but the tidings of the *Mahotsava* ceremony spreads far and wide, and countless men and women resort to the place and receive a warm and cordial treatment at the hands of the host who figures on this occasion as a friend of the friendless, sometimes offering all that he has to the destitute and the needy.

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CHAPTER VI

The Post-Chaitanya Literature

I. (a) The Court of Raja Krisna Chandra of Nadia—Vitiated classical taste and word-painting.

(b) Alaol—The Muhammadan poet who heralded the new age. His life and a review of his works.

(c) The Story of Vidya-Sundara.

(d) Early poets of the Vidya-Sundara poems.

(e) Bharat Chandra Ray Gunakara—the great poet of the 18th century Pranaram Chakravarti.

II. (a) The Court of Raja Rajavallabh of Raja Nagara in Dacca. Its poets. Jay Narayan Sen—Ananda Mayi Devi.

(b) The poets of the school of Bharat Chandra.

III. Poetry of rural Bengal.

(a) The *Kavtwalas* and their songs—Raghu, the Cobbler—Haru Thakur—Rama Vasu and others. The Portugese *Kavtwalla* Mr. Antony.

(b) Religious Songs

(c) Rama Prasad Sen and poets of his school.

IV. The *Jatras* or popular theatres.

V. The three great poets with whom the age closed—Dasarathi—Ramanid h Gupta—Iswar Chandra Gupta.

VI. The folk-literature of Bengal.

1. (a) The Court of Raja Krisna Chandra of Nadia. Vitiated classical taste and word-painting.

A new era was dawning in our literature. Society after a great movement sinks into callousness. A great idea passes away; and in the age that follows the spasmodic efforts of common men to reach the high ideal expressed in some great historic character slowly spend themselves. Lesser men arise who pose as leaders of society, scoffing at all that constitutes greatness; and custom and convention—two hoary-headed monsters—once more clasp the people in their iron grip. This is an age when craft and ingenuity find favour instead of open-hearted sincerity; when moral courage,

The Reaction and its effects.

character, manliness and strength of conviction fall into disfavour and dworldly manoeuvres of all sorts pass for high qualities and are praised as indicating wisdom.

In the literature of such an age, we miss that genial flow of noble ideas—that freedom of thought and freshness of natural instincts which characterise great epochs in a nation's life, and in their place we find the poets struggling to furnish long and wearisome details about a small point till it is worn thread-bare by its very ingenuity; a small idea is over-coloured and followed in frivolous niceties on the lines of a vitiated classical taste till it becomes almost grotesque or absurd.

Such an age came upon the society of Bengal and its influence is stamped on the literature of the 18th century. This was an age when Muhammadan power had just decayed. Robbers and bandits overran the country; and knavery of all sorts was practised in the courts of the Rajas. The school set up by Aurangzeb in politics became the model for his chiefs to follow in their own courts. Conspiracies, plots and counterplots amongst brothers and relations who wanted to elbow down and kill one another to gain the *gadi*, were events of every-day occurrence in the courts of Indian noblemen.

The political atmosphere.

Raja Krisna Chandra of Navadvipa by a stratagem which was highly praised deprived his own uncle of his rightful ownership of the *gadi* of Krishnagar. Krisna Chandra's son Sambhu Chandra played a similar dodge and tried to usurp the possessions of his father, by spreading a false report of his death. The Raja was thus going to be paid in his own coin. His agent at Agradwip in Burdwan by an equally unscrupulous action ousted the rightful owner out of the possession of that place and gained it for his own master. In the courts of Serajuddulah, the Nawab, plots of a far more important character were being formed fraught with consequences which were to change the history of the whole of India. It was not an age conspicuous for its appreciation of high ideas or of noble sentiments. "Raja Krisna Chandra was

Raja Krisna Chandra.

hostile to the followers of Chaitanya."* He frustrated the efforts of Raja Rajavallabh who had tried to obtain sanction of the Pundits of Bengal to the remarriage of Hindu widows of tender ages. Yet Krisna Chandra was the most important man of the period in the Hindu Society of Bengal. His court had gathered round it some of the greatest Sanskrit scholars of the country. He appreciated merit, patronised literature, and encouraged art. The far-famed clay-models of Krishnagar and the fine cotton-industry of Santipur owe their perfection to the patronage of the Raja. The Raja was friendly to the English and it was he who first put the idea of overthrowing Serajuddullah by the help of the English into the head of Mirzafar and other influential men engaged in conspiracy against the Nawab. Krisna Chandra was himself a scholar of no mean order. He could discuss knotty problems of logic with Hariram Tarkasiddhanta and in theology he was a match for the far-famed Ramananda Vachaspati. He was well-versed in the doctrines of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, and made endowment of lands to the great exponents of that learning of the period—Siva Rama Vachaspti and Vireswar Nyayapanchanana. He could compose *extempore* verses in Sanskrit and completed personally in public with Baneswar Vidyalankara—the famous Sanskrit poet of his court.

The great patron of Bengali.

Besides all these Raja Krisna Chandra was the great patron of Bengali literature of the 18th century.

The over-drawn similes of Sanskrit and Persian models.

Poetry under such patronage became the creation of school-men and courtiers. It no longer aimed at offering its tribute to God but tried to please the fancy of a Raja; the poets found the gates of the palace open to receive them and cared not if the doors of heaven were shut. For models of Bengali court-poetry, we shall quote here a passage translated from the Naisadha-Charita—a Sanskrit poem held in great admiration by the scholars of the period.

* Kaitisa Vamsavali Charita, p. 29.

"How shall I describe, O King, the profuse hair on Damayanti's head! They compare it with the hair of a *chamari* (a species of deer). But it is foolish to compare Damayanti's hair to what that animal hides behind him as a mark of shame. They say her eyes are as beautiful as those of the gazelle. But it is as a sign of his disappointment and defeat that the gazelle kicks the ground with his hoofs. God took the quintessence of the moon and made Damayanti's face. So a hole was made on the moon's surface and they call it a spot. The lotuses have all fled into the watery forts being struck by the beauty of Damayanti's face. Before God had created Damayanti, he exercised himself in the art of creating feminine beauty by his creation of all other women, so that he might give perfection to that single form of Damayanti; and when the ideal was reached in her, the subsequent forms were created only to establish the superiority of Damayanti over the rest."

Not only the Naisadha-Charita but the Dasakumara-Charita, Harsa-Charita and other Sanskrit works admired in this period, abound with passages like the above, and these served as models to the Bengali writers who were under the immediate influence of the courts and they themselves began to regale on niceties which now seem so absurd to us. The Persian poems which were favoured in this age, also contain long drawn-out similes verging on the ridiculous, and the noblemen and scholars, who prided themselves on a vain-glorious pedantry, encouraged our poets to introduce similar artificial compositions into Bengali. Here are a few short passages translated from a favourite Persian work of the period.

"Her black hair was like a net to catch the wise." "The lustre of her nails kept the hearts of all men fixed on them. They were like so many rising moons." "Her waist was slender as a single hair or rather half of it."—Zelekha.

Slenderness of the waist was held to be a point of feminine beauty, hence absurdities passed for niceties and were admired as poetic skill!

The literature that sprang up under the patronage of courts was thus vitiated by their influence. Not only in the style of writing but in its subject-matter also, it showed the control of those evil stars that held sway over the literary horizon of Bengal at this time. The romantic conceptions of Persian tales are often singularly unpleasing to the Bengali mind; especially does this remark apply to those *kutnis* or serving women, who acted as agents in matters of illicit passion. Yet these women figure prominently in the literature of this period. Here is an extract, translated from Zelekha, a Persian poem, in which a *kutni* is vaunting her powers before the heroine of the tale. The Bengali poets were trying their level best to import such characters into their poems.

The *Kutnis*.

"Who is it that has tampered with your heart? Tell me why it is that your face beautiful as a flower has grown pale and yellowish. Why are you waning day by day like the moon? I am afraid, you have fallen in love. Tell me who is that person. If he be the very moon whose abode is in the sky, I will make him come down to the earth as a slave to your wishes. If he be a spirit of the mountains, I know such charms that he would be put into a phial and brought to you. If he be merely a man, take my word, I shall make him a bond-slave to you. He will be made to minister to your wishes in every matter and you need not care to please him by offering him your services."

These *kutnis* are numerous in Persian tales. They are not of the class of Durvala, the maid-servant described in the Chandi Kavyas, dealt with by us in a previous chapter. The latter are knaves who repay the kindness shown to them by creating disunion amongst the members of a family to serve their own selfish ends and by robbing their masters as much as they can, when entrusted with marketing. Durvala bears a family-likeness to Manthara of the Ramayana, though placed in different situations, and these women should not be confounded with the *kutnis* of the Muhammadan stories; they are not accessories to immoral

The maid-servants of the Hindu classics not to be confounded with *Kutnis*.

purposes. The *dutis* perform a quite different function in the Vaisnava poems where love is spiritualised.

Indeed the Hindu poets had hitherto taken particular care to keep scenes of illicit love out of their poems. But the *kutni* now became a very common thing in our literature, especially in the poems of Vidya-Sundara. A very striking instance of such women as figuring in the poetry of the age is found in the character of Hira Malini in Bharat Chandra's Annada Mangal—the most popular Bengali poem of the day.

Thus in the style of poetry as well as in its spirit, the court literature of Bengal presents a striking difference to the earlier Bengali works. The style and the spirit both became depraved—the former by a vain-glorious pedantry which made descriptions grotesque by their over-drawn niceties, the serious often passing into the burlesque—and the latter by scurrilous obscenities grosser than anything in Sterne, Smollett or Wycherley and by the introduction of characters like those of Hira Malini and Vidu Brahmani—accessories to illicit love of the most revolting type. The descriptions of men and women are often marred by overcolouring like those of the beards of Hudibras described by Butler in a well-known lengthy passage.

The depraved taste in style and in spirit.

But a literary epoch cannot be wholly without its redeeming features. There must be some really meritorious points by which it can attract and make people its votaries, reconciling them even to its vices. In this age, a rigid classical taste gave a unique finish to the Bengali style and enriched it with the variety of Sanskrit metres that so powerfully appeal to the ear. Bharat Chandra Ray, the court poet of Raja Krisna Chandra, stands alone in the field of our old literature as a word-painter. No poet before him contributed so much to our wealth of expression or had such success in importing elegance to our Sanskritic metres. The poet here, like a true Indian artisan, applied himself patiently to the sphere of decorated art. He

The merits of the literary epoch.

The great poet Bharat Chandra

hunted for and found choicest expressions and strung them into the most elegant metres and carried the whole school of Bengali poets after him maddened by the zeal to imitate his style. The heart had been feasted to satiety on the emotions contained in the Vaisnava literature, the ear now wanted to be pleased. High sentiments expressed in rich poetry had abounded in the literature of the Vaisnavas; enough of such. The scholars would have a brief day of their own. They would show feats of clever expression, pedantry and wealth of words strung together with masterly skill. The people were drawn by this novelty. After the strain of a high-strung idealistic spirituality, they were glad to revel in grossly sensual ideas. They descended from heaven to have a little taste of the mundane pleasures. The Sanskrit vocabulary and Sanskrit works of rhetoric became the chief sources of poetic inspiration; yet the period, by a strange irony of fate, was ushered in by one who was not a Hindu, as it would be natural to expect, but a Muhammadan. A Muhammadan writer arose with a mastery of the Sanskrit tongue, the like of which we rarely find among Hindu poets in the Bengali literature. He was Syed Alaol, translator of Padmavat, a Hindi poem written by Mir Muhammad in 1521 A.D.

Syed Alaol.

(b) *Alaol—the Muhammadan poet who heralded the new age—His life and a review of his works.*

Alaol was the son of a minister of Samser Kutub, the Nawab of Jalalpur (in the district of Faridpur). When a youngman, he undertook a sea-voyage in the company of his father. The crew were attacked by Portuguese pirates, known in the country as *Hermadas* (from *Armada*). We have a line in the Chandi Kavya by Mukundaram describing the great fear in which sailors held these *Hermadas*. "Night and day the merchant plied his oars in fear of being overtaken by the *Hermadas*.",* The father of Alaol was killed in a hand-to-hand fight with the marauders and our poet narrowly

His father is killed.

* "রাত্রি দিন বহে যায় হার্দাদের ডরে।"

Kavi Kankan Chandi.

escaped a similar fate, and fled to Arakan where Magan Thakur, the Muslim prime minister of the ruling Chief of the place, received him hospitably being pleased with the great scholarship of the youngman. He resided at the place for many years and when he was verging on forty, he was ordered by Magan Thakur to translate the Hindi poem Padmavat into Bengali and he did so to please his patron and master. Some years passed in this high and agreeable company, and our poet seems to have tasted during this time the sweets of life after the woes that had befallen him in the early part of his career. He was again ordered by Magan Thakur to translate a Persian work named Saifulmulluk and Badiujjamal into Bengali. But he had now declined 'in the vale of years' and when a few chapters of this book were written, Magan Thakur, the poet's friend and patron, met with an unexpected death, and Alaol in great disappointment left the half-finished poem and retired into a life of rest. But it was yet reserved for him to be subjected to further vicissitudes in life; and greater sorrows than those hitherto experienced were still in store for him. Suja, brother of Aurangzeb, had come to Arakan about this period and a fight ensued between the unfortunate prince and the Arakan chief,– the former being completely defeated. A wicked man named Mirza gave evidence against Alaol, to satisfy a private grudge, implicating him as a party to Suja's action against the chief of Arakan. Alaol was thrown into prison, where he spent few years, subjected to all sorts of cruel treatment. He was, however, released and spent nine years of his life in close retirement. Syed Musa, a rich nobleman of Arakan, took some interest in the poet during these evil days and at his request he completed his translation of Saifulmulluk and Badiujjamal. Alaol had grown old by this time and had lost his wonted spirit—the spring of all his noble poetry. In the

Enjoys the patronage of Magan Thakur.

Magan Thakur dies

Alaol thrown into prison.

His poetry halts.

last part of this translation we miss his characteristic genial flow and sweetness of expression. Besides the above two works he wrote sequels to the stories of Lora Chandrani and Sati Maina —poems written by Daulat Kazi in Bengali. The latter works were undertaken by our poet at the command of Solaman, another minister of the Arakan Chief. At the request of an influential man of the court named Syed Muhammad Khan, Alaol translated the Persian poem Hastapaikar by Nizami Gaznavi. Besides these, Alaol wrote several poems on Radha and Krisna, some of which display exquisite poetic touches. Alaol was born about the year 1618; was thrown into prison in 1658; and being released lived to a good old age, till the close of the 17th century.

A list of his works.

It will be seen that Alaol the poet worked mainly in the field of translation, and the chief work of his Muse on which his fame rests—the Padmavati—is only as we have said, the Bengali translation of a Hindi poem. But Alaol's translation is not only free but is also marked by great originality and though conforming in the main to the tale of the Hindi bard, is an improvement upon it in many respects.

An improvement on the original.

The Padmavati is written in a high-flown Sanskritic Bengali. Alaol is the first of the poets who aimed at word-painting and at that finished Sanskritic expression which is the *forte* of the Bengali literature of the 18th century. In fact Alaol, though, generally speaking, inferior to Bharat Chandra, because he lacks the "elegant genius" of the latter eclipses nearly all the other poets of Bengal in his profuse use of Sanskritic terms. For a Muslim writer to have the credit of importing the largest number of Sanskritic words into a Bengali poem and thus heralding an age of classical revival, is no small achievement, and we are bound to admit that none of the Hindu poets of the age in which he lived, was in this respect, a match for him.

The Sanskritic style and the Hindu spirit.

Alaol has given descriptions of the religious ceremonies of the Hindus, their customs and manners with an accuracy and minuteness which strike us as wonderful, coming as they do from the pen of a Muhammadan writer. He has given a classification of feminine emotions in all their subtlest forms as found in the Sanskrit books of rhetoric, in the portraiture of such characters as Vasakasajja, Khandita, Kalahantarita and Vipralabdha. He has represented the ten different stages of separation from a lover (বিরহের দশ দশা), closely following the rules laid down in Sahityadarpana and in Pingala's works on rhetoric. He has discoursed on medicine in a manner which would do credit to a physician versed in the Ayurvedic lore. He has, besides, shown a knowledge of the movements of the planets and their influence on human fortune worthy of an expert astrologer. In his accounts of the little rituals connected with the religious ceremonies of the Hindus such as the Prasasta Vandana, he displays a mastery of detail which could only have been expected from an experienced priest. He has besides, described the rules of long and short vowels, the principles যগণ, রগণ, etc., by which the various Sanskrit metres are governed, and quoted Sanskrit couplets like a Pandit, to serve as texts for the theological matter introduced in his book. The Muslim poet is profuse in his eulogies of Siva the Hindu God, and all through the work writes in the spirit and strain of a devout Hindu. Curiously enough, his work has been preserved in Chittagong by Muhammadan readers. The manuscripts of Padmavati hitherto obtained, all belong to the borderlands of Arakan in the back-woods of Chittagong, copied in Persian characters and preserved by the rural Muhammadan folk of those localities. No Hindu has ever yet cared to read them. This goes to prove how far the taste of the Muhammadans was imbued with Hindu culture. This book, that we should have thought, could be interesting only to Hindu readers, on account of its lengthy disquisitions on theology and Sanskrit rhetoric, has been

His work read, admired and preserved by Muhammadans.

strangely preserved, ever since Aurangzeb's time, by Muslims, for whom it could apparently have no attraction, nay to whom it might even seem positively repellent. From the time of Magan Thakur, the Muhammadan minister, till the time of Shaikh Hamidulla of Chittagong who published it in 1893—covering a period of nearly 250 years, this book was copied, read and admired by the Muhammadans of Chittagong exclusively. What surprises us most is the interest taken by the rustic folk in its high-flown Sanskritic Bengali. The Province of Chittagong must have been once a nucleus of Sanskrit learning to have disseminated so deep a liking for the classic tongue of the Hindus among the lowest strata of society, and specially amongst Muhammadans who might have been expected to have the least aptitude for this.

The Sanskritic culture of Chittagong people.

The poem Padmavati deals with a well-known episode in Indian history. The Emperor Alauddin of Delhi had heard of the wonderful beauty of Padmavati, queen of the Raja of Chitor, and demanded her for his harem. Bhim Sen, the Raja who is called Ratnasen in the Bengali poem, treated this request with the contempt which it deserved, and the result was that for twelve years the emperor laid siege to Chitor. Bhim Sen was eventually defeated, and his queen sought death on the funeral pyre,—true to the traditions of Rajput women. This story had formed the subject of a poem by Mir Muhammad in Hindi which contains about 10,000 lines. The Bengali Padmavati by Alaol has about 10,500 lines.

The subject of the poem.

I have said that the classic taste, which made the Bengali poets of the 18th century revel in exaggerated and high-flown imageries, was indicated in the work of this Muhammadan poet, to such a considerable extent, that he may be said to have heralded the new epoch. Alaol rang the bell of the new age and the sound was caught by a host of other poets amongst whom Bharat Chandra was the most prominent. I shall here quote some passages from Alaol's Padmavati to show how his

The New Age.

description owns kinship with those found in the Sanskrit and Persian poems already referred to by us, as also with the high-sounding flourishes of style which characterise the Bengali poems that followed the age of Alaol.

Far-fetched similes

*"The light that beams in the face of Padmavati puts to shame the light reflected from a golden mirror. One curious fact with regard to the face is that two lotuses are confined in the disc of the moon (her face). The sun who finds his friends so confined by his enemy, came to the rescue, in the shape of the vermilion mark on the forehead. The god of love, in aid of the sun, held the vow of her eyebrows, and aimed his shafts, which were the glances of her eyes. The only regret is that these friends though so near were not allowed to see each other."

The lotuses are her two eyes. The sun according to the poetic tradition of Sanskrit rhetoric (কবি-প্রসিদ্ধি) is a lover of the lotus. The moon is unfriendly towards the lotus according to a similar tradition. The lotus blooms in the day-time and fades in the evening—a circumstance which caused the acceptance of this idea by the poets.

For pages and pages one may follow descriptions on this line. The ingenuity of such compositions, greatly favoured, as they were, by the scholars of a particular epoch, show the artificial taste of the age—the absurdities that passed for intellectual feats and the grotesque and the uncouth that were accepted as beautiful.

*"কনক মুকুর জিনি মুখজ্যোতি সাজে—
দেখহ অপূর্ব্ব রীত বন্ধন উপরে।
পদ্মযুগ বন্দী হয় চন্দ্রের মাঝারে॥
শত্রুমাঝে মিত্রবন্দী দেখি দিবাকর।
ধরিয়া সিন্দুর রূপ আইল নিয়ড়॥
ভুরুযুগ ধনুক ধরিয়া পঞ্চবাণ।
তিলে তিলে হানে বাণ কটাক্ষ সন্ধান॥
কমল নয়নী মাত্র মনে এই দুঃখ।
নিকটে থাকিয়া মিত্র না দেখায় মুখ॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

But Alaol's poems often reach a high degree of excellence from the wealth of their Sanskritic expressions. It is to be regretted that the excellence of their style, and the effect produced by the jungle of classic words and associations suggested by them, are not such as can be conveyed in translation. The author frequently imitates the style of the great song-masters of Bengal with a happy effect. The following passage reminds us of some well-known lines from the Sanskrit Gita-Govinda by Jayadeva.

The untranslatable beauty of style.

"In the spring season the bridegroom revels in the joyous company of his bride. They are like two moons, shedding as it were, ambrosia in the lovely smiles on their softly curving lips. The flowers are in full bloom and from the floral bowers the cuckoo cooes pleasantly in the company of its mate; the bees hum delightfully; the cool Malaya breeze charged with the scents of flowers softly touches the bridegroom heightening the charm of the sweet words of his lady-love. The *asvattha* tree, the prince of the forest, displays its wealth of new leaves, the *tamala* stands obliquely and the mango-creepers are rich with fresh foliage and tendrils. The hearts of the youthful pair are gladsome. They are decked with the wreaths of the *rangan*, *mallika* and the *malati* flowers."

"বসন্তে নাগরবর নাগরী বিলাসে
বর বালা দুই ইন্দু, ঝরে যেন সুধা বিন্দু,
মৃদুমন্দ অধরে ললিত মধু হাসে
কুসুম প্রফুল্লিত মধুব্রত ঝঙ্কত,
কুহুত পরাভূত, কুঞ্জে রত রাসে
মলয় সমীর সুসৌরভ শীতল,
বিলোলিত পতি অতি-রস-ভাসে ॥
প্রফুল্লিত বনস্পতি কুটিল তমাল দ্রুম।
মুকুলিত চূত-লতা কোরক জালে।
যুবজন-হৃদয় আনন্দ পরিপূরিত।
রঙ্গ-মল্লিকা-মালতী-মালে ॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

Alas, the beauty of metre and of choice Sanskrit words that characterise this passage is but ill-conveyed in the above translation.

Indebted to earlier poets

The line "চলিল কামিনী, গজেন্দ্রগামিনী, খঞ্জন-গমন-শোভিতা" is evidently inspired by Vidyapati's "গেলি কামিনী, গজহু গামিনী, বিহসি পালটি নেহারি" and the lines beginning with "আজি কেন বিপরীত তোমার বদন" breathe the sentiments of Chandi Das in his well-known passage opened by the line "আজি কেন তোমায় এমন দেখি।"

The description of the seasons is full of delicate sentiments and calls up familiar scenes by suggestive lines. During the rains the lovers sit up at night in merry talk and *"if there be a sound of thunder she is startled, and throws herself into the arms of her lover—an unexpected surprise to him."

There are many pretty lines in the poem recalling scenes of domestic affection and of the delicate associations of love.

The preliminary lines in praise of God are full of sincerity and devotion. †"He created life to manifest Himself in love, and death to show that He is also the terrible. Sweet scents of flowers He created to indicate heaven and evil odours to warn men of the filth of hell. As a sign of His high favour, He created sweet things, delicious to the taste, and the bitter and the pungent, to indicate His wrath. He secretly hid

In praise of God.

* "চমকিলে বিদ্যুৎ চমকি কণ্ঠে লাগে।
বজ্রপাতে কমলিনী ত্রাসিত হইয়া
ধরয়ে পতির গীমে অধিক আঁটিয়া॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

† "আপন প্রচার হেতু সৃজিল জীবন।
নিজ ভয় দর্শাইতে সৃজিল মরণ॥
সুগন্ধি সৃজিল প্রভু স্বর্গ বুঝাইতে।
সৃজিলেক দুর্গন্ধ নরক জানাইতে॥
মিষ্ট রস সৃজিলেক কৃপা-অনুরোধ।
তিক্ত কটু কষা সৃজি জানাইল ক্রোধ॥

the honey in the flowers and by creating the bees He brought it to the knowledge of the world. He created all in the twinkling of an eye, and the great firmament created by Him stands without the support of pillars. The sun and the moon He created, and also created the night and the day. The winter and the summer He created, and the heat, the rays of the sun and the clouds which He lined with lightning. He pervades the universe—both revealed and unrevealed. The virtuous and the saintly know Him, but the vicious know Him not."

In this hymn Alaol follows more or less the Hindi original of Mir Muhammad.

The characteristic features of a Muhammadan tale.

But though in the main story Alaol follows a style on the line of the Sanskrit classics and shows a wonderfully close acquaintance with the manners, customs and religious life of the Hindus, yet reading between the lines one may discover the vein of a Muhammadan poet by the non-Hindu elements to be found in his work, though couched beneath a highly Sanskritised form of Bengali. A certain extravagance of imagination reminds us, at every stage, of the excesses of fancy which characterise Arabic and Persian tales. Raja Ratnasen heard of the beauty of Padmavati, and even before he saw her, fell into a fit of violent love; renounced the world as an ascetic, and wandered through the forests. And "with him 1600

পুষ্পে জন্মাইল মধু গুপ্ত আকার।
সৃজিয়া মক্ষিকা কৈল তাহার প্রচার॥
এতেক সৃজিতে তিল না হইল বিলম্ব।
অন্তরীক্ষ গঠিয়া রাখিছে বিনিস্তম্ভ॥
সৃজিলেক দিবাকর শশি দিবা রাত্রি।
সৃজিলেক নক্ষত্র নির্ম্মল পাঁতি পাঁতি॥
সৃজিলেক সুশীতল গ্রীষ্ম রৌদ্র আর।
করিল মেঘের মাঝে বিদ্যুৎ সঞ্চার॥
প্রকট গুপ্ত রহে সবাকারে ব্যাপি।
ধার্ম্মিক চিহ্নয়ে তারে না চিহ্নয়ে পাপী॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

princes turned ascetic."* The princess was sad, and the message of her sorrow was carried by the bird *sukа*. The poet describes the mission of the bird and the effect which his flight produced on the objects that he came in contact with.

†"The message of her sorrow was carried by the bird through the sky, and the clouds became dark, in an excess of grief. A spark of this sorrow touched the disc of the moon and created a spot on its surface. The wings of the bird drooped under his burden of sorrow and they looked like lightning. The bird passed over the sea and its waters, in their deep woe, became saline."

These excesses of fancy, which should not be confounded with the play of poetic imagination, make the passages such gibberish as children may be heard amusing themselves within their folk-lore.

Ratnasen's wrestling-feats.

Ratnasen's wrestling-feats and skill in riding, which have been graphically described in the poem, have many points which remind us of the feats exhibited by modern circus troupes. They give us a complete idea of the manly sports and pastimes that found favour during the Muhammadan period, though the description is not altogether free from exaggeration.

* "নৃপতি গমন শুনি হইয়া বিরাগী ॥
ষোল শত রাজার কুমার হইল যোগী ॥"
Alaol's Padmavati.

† "দুঃখের সংবাদ লয়ে বিহঙ্গ উড়িল।
সেই দুঃখে জলদ শ্যামল বর্ণ ভেল ॥
স্ফুলিঙ্গ পড়িল উড়ি চাঁদের উপর।
অম্বরে শ্যামল তহি ভেল শশধর ॥
উড়িতে নারিল পাখা শূন্যের উপর।
উল্কাপাত হয় হেন বলে তারে নর ॥
সমুদ্র উপর দিয়া করিল গমন।
জলনিধি হইল তহি পুরিত লবণ ॥"
Alaol's Padmavati.

Alaol's Padmavati has little interest as a story. The characters are not delineated with skill, and the conception of the plot does not show any great mastery of the poet over his incidents. Its main charm rests on those stray glimpses of poetic elegances and high classical refinement, with which the book abounds, and no less on the great erudition of the poet, indicated in many noble passages. We appreciate the truth of what Alaol says of himself in the preliminary chapter of Badiujjamal.

The story is a failure.

Poet's great scholarship.

*"At the order (of Magan Thakur) I wrote Padmavati; therein I showed the utmost powers that my intelligence possessed."

Though greatly inferior to Padmavati in poetic merit, the Saifulmulluk and Badiujjamal of this poet contains occasional passages of much beauty. The preliminary hymn to God is quite a match for that which we found in Padmavati. †"Where would be the glory of light, if it were not placed side by side with darkness! If the wicked were not in the world, who would know the value of a saintly life! The salt water of the sea makes us appreciate more the boon of sweet fresh water. If there were no misers, we could not give our tribute of praise to liberal minds. The true and the false represent but two

Another poem by Alaol.

* "আজ্ঞা পাইয়া রচিলাম গ্রন্থ পদ্মাবতী।
যতেক আছিল মোর বুদ্ধির শকতি॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

† "উজ্জল মহিমা নাহি অন্ধকার বিনে।
অধম না হলে বল উত্তম কেবা চিনে॥
লবণ কারণে চিনে মিষ্ট জল সীমা।
কৃপণ না হত কোথা দাতার মহিমা॥
সত্য যে অসত্য দুই মতে হল যত।
ভাল মন্দ যে বলে না ক'রো কর্ণগত॥
যেই পুঁজি আছে যার হৃদয় ভাণ্ডার।
লাজ ছাড়ি আলায়োল ব্যক্ত কর তার॥"

Alaol's Padmavati.

sides of a picture. Don't you Alaol, care to listen to the praise or blame of this world. The little stock that you have in your own heart, give freely to the world, without feeling ashamed of it."

In the preliminary account of Padmavati Alaol says that Magan Thakur, the prime minister of the Chief of Arakan, had employed him to translate the Hindi poem into Bengali,—high-flown Sanskritic Bengali,—because the people of Arakan did not understand Hindi but understood Bengali. This leads us to the conclusion that the popular literature not only of Assam but also of the borderlands of Arakan used to be written in Bengali, a circumstance confirmed by the other fact to which we have already drawn attention, *viz.*, that it was the low class Muhammadan population of these places who have preserved these poems for about 250 years.

The faults and merits of Padmavati are characteristic of the literary works of the period that follows. The Sanskritic style used by Alaol was greatly improved by Bharat Chandra. The descriptions of the school that follows abound with niceties which mystify the reader, as in the case of Padmavati. In Bharat Chandra the great master of the age, we only find these niceties somewhat curtailed, and absurdities often reclaimed, by a sweet jingle of words, which please the ear, like the warblings of birds—without conveying to us any clear sense or meaning.

The style and the taste.

The moral tone became more and more vitiated; and Bharat Chandra, had he lived in this age, when poets are not allowed to revel in the unrestrained language of sensualism and the grosser passions, could not have given us his masterpiece *Vidya-Sundara*. The literature of Bengal in the 18th century was pitched in the key of a high-strung classic taste; yet it bore no mark of any master hand, that could shape circumstances and give them life. The works of the period are nevertheless full of sparkling passages and delicate sentiment, and they display above all a unique treasure of choice expressions, which has greatly enriched our literature.

The poets had betaken themselves to the painter's art. They did not aim at inspiring life; they wanted to give finish to the form. They busied themselves with colouring, till some of the pictures they drew became blurred by their very efforts to embellish them. For it was not the natural that engaged their poetic powers, but the artificial and exaggerated, which pandered to the vitiated taste of mere scholars. From the time of Alaol the tone gradually degenerated;—the good sense, the sound principles, and the domestic instincts that aimed at purity were lost. There was a violent return to the senses. Sensualism of the grossest kind—unrestrained and vulgar sensualism, redeemed only by fine literary touches and embellished by choice metaphors—pervades a considerable portion of the literature of this age. The poets in their strenuous attempts to depict vulgar scenes cared only to produce effects by their rhythmical pomp; and when one reads such passages he thinks more of the metre and of the niceties of expression than of the wicked and immoral spirit that they breathe. Hence the lawless tone loses much of its force and the scenes themselves appear as harmless as painted devils. Poetry sank to the level of mere painting, as I have said, and to that of a merely decorative type,—painting in which skilled and ornate designs are worked up with inexhaustible patience by gifted hands like those we find in the caves of Elephanta.

—— :o :——

The Story of Vidya-Sundara

Annada Mangal.

The story of Vidya-Sundara finds a prominent place in the works which are called Annada Mangal or Kalika Mangal. Annada, Kali and Chandi are all names of the same goddess though their forms are different. These poems therefore are written in honour

of a deity. The religious element however, is introduced by way of apology. It was not the custom of the old Bengali poets who rose with the revival of Hinduism to write on a subject which had no touch with religion; and the religious garb of the story is thus accounted for. Grossest matter however is introduced into these works, though bearing a holy name. Those who have seen the sculptural figures in *bas*-relief on the walls of the Puri and Kanarak temples will not be astonished to find a religious work associated with these scenes of vulgar sensualism which are to be found in Vidya-Sundara—a poem forming part of the religious work Annada Mangal.

Sundara hears a report of Vidya's beauty

Sundara, son of Raja Guna Sindhu of Kanchi (Conjeeveram) hears a report of the remarkable beauty of the Princess Vidya, daughter of Raja Vira Sinha of Burdwan. Vidya was not only a peerless beauty, but her scholarship was so great that she had sent a challenge all over India offering her hand to the person who would defeat her in scholarship. The challenge was accepted by many distinguished princes who flocked to the Burdwan palace, but they were all defeated by the princess whose scholarly discourses in various branches of learning completely out-witted them.

Comes to Burdwan and meets Hira.

Sundara, without taking permission of his royal father, went alone *incognito* and riding a noble horse reached the capital of Raja Vira Sinha. A large *Bakul* grove spread its shadow in the precincts of the city and the fragrance of its flower was carried on all sides by the pleasant evening breeze, when Sundara alighted from his horse, and sat in the grove, not knowing where to seek shelter for the night. At that moment a rather elderly woman whose charms were not altogether lost by years,—a courtezan and a coquette, happened to come there to gather flowers,—for Hira was a flower-woman whose duty it was to make wreaths and garlands for the ladies of the Raja's house at early dawn every day. She was charmed with the handsome appearance

of the Prince and offered to lodge him for the night and as long as he might wish to do so, if he wanted to put up at her place. He called her aunt, and though she was not pleased with the prince for calling her so, as in her heart of hearts she entertained the hope of being flattered with a little attention from him, yet she showed him every hospitality at her house; but when she asked him who he was and what his mission was at Burdwan she could elicit no satisfactory reply. The Prince said he was a youngman who had taken a fancy to travel in various lands for the sake of pleasure.

The evening passed in pleasant conversation, and in the night the flower-woman began to wreathe her floral store into garlands; and placed them in a beautiful basket, and Sundara asked her what she would do with them. She said that the garlands would be presented to Princess Vidya at early dawn, a task which it was her duty to perform every morning by appointment from the queen. The Prince was very much delighted to find in Hira a woman who had access to the Princess. He asked her many questions about the beauty of Vidya and Hira following the close lines of classical metaphor and a highly ornate style, as dictated by the Sanskrit rules of rhetoric, drew an over-coloured sketch of the Princess which had the effect of greatly heightening the desire of the Prince for an interview with the far-famed beauty. He made a request to Hira to allow him to weave a garland of flowers for Vidya to be presented to her next morning; of course he did not mean that it was to be offered in his name; as usual she would give it to the Princess;—the garland was to be woven by him—this was all that he wanted. Hira did not see any harm in this and Sundara, who was an expert in the art of preparing floral wreaths, applied his whole heart to the work and prepared a garland with remarkable skill;—the petals of the flowers were so arranged as to form characters by which he conveyed his love to the lady in a beautiful Sanskrit *sloka*.

Offers to present a garland.

Hira had to sit up till a late hour of the night, as much time was taken by Sundara in artistically preparing the garland; so she was late in arriving at the palace the next morning, and Vidya reproved her for her delay threatening that she would bring her conduct to the notice of the King. Hira said that it had taken her a long time to weave one special garland for her, and that the Princess should pardon her for this first fault. "Where is the beautiful garland of which you speak?" she said; and as Hira handed the thing to her she felt the dawn of love in her heart as she read the name of the Prince, and the message conveyed to her by the exquisitely artistic arrangement of the flowers. It was as though reading an elegant poem; the garland rich in design, perfect in execution and containing the sweet message of love, charmed her heart and she importuned Hira, asking her to tell her who it was that had made it. Hira at first tried to maintain her position by declaring that she herself had done so; but the Princess laughed at all attempts on her part to establish this point by oaths and long speeches, and she was afterwards obliged to confess the whole truth to Vidya who, on hearing it, could not disguise her feeling from the flower-woman and wanted to have a sight of the gifted young man.

Love's message and its effects.

The inner apartments of a Raja's house are eternally shut against all out-siders; but through the shutters of her window, Vidya saw Sundara, who was brought by Hira to a convenient place, that they might have a sight of each other. It should be stated here that Vidya's learned discussions with those who courted her hand were always following the custom of Hindus in such cases, managed behind the screen with the help of interpreters and in no case was a prince allowed to have even a peep at her.

A sight of each other.

They saw each other and fell in love. How could an interview be effected? It was impossible to attempt anything like it on the face of the guards—those eunuchs who kept a strict and vigilant watch at the palace

Sundara as a *sannyasin*.

gate. Sundara disguised himself as a *Sannyasin*, wore matted locks and a false beard and covered his face with ashes and saw Raja Vira Sinha. To the surprise of the Raja and his courtiers he declared his desire to enter into a scholarly discussion with Vidya, and, if he succeeded in winning the game, to take her for his wife. A strange story from the lips of an ascetic! Such a challenge would only be entitled to credence and approval if a prince were the suitor. But as Vidya had promised that any man was welcome to accept the challenge irrespective of age and social status, the false *Sadhu* insisted on being ushered behind the screen to have a discourse with her in various branches of learning and win her for his bride. The maids of Vidya humorously asked her to match her powers with his and if she should prove the weaker of the two, to court the lot of an ascetic's wife and wander with him bare-footed, visiting shrines like Benares, Gaya and Prayag! But Vidya whose mind was full of the handsome prince would not allow the *Sannyasin* to approach her, and put off the date for doing so to an indefinite time on some pretext or other.

Vidya puts off the date.

Both the prince and the princess were longing for an interview. Hira was taken into their confidence, but she was afraid of the guards who would tear her to pieces if they had a scent of her having a share in the business.

Prince Sundara felt that life was unbearable without an interview with Vidya. He fasted and worshipped Kali with true devotion, who granted him a charmed rod wherewith the prince worked out a subterranean passage from the room in which he lodged, leading through a mazy tunnel to Vidya's room in the palace.

Equipped with a charmed rod.

The maids of Vidya were taken into her confidence and they all promised secrecy. One night when the starry sky, with its grey linings of clouds looked beautiful, causing sweet emotions to grow in young hearts.—Vidya felt a great longing to meet the prince. The maids attending on her suddenly saw that a deep cavity had been made inside

The meeting.

the room, through which a turban sparkling with diamonds rose before their bewildered gaze, and shortly after there appeared a human form, the handsomest that had ever met their eyes—Sundara was smiling in triumph and looking to Vidya assured her that it was all through the grace of Kali that he had at last succeeded in making an underground passage leading to her apartments. The maids felt reassured at this words; but Vidya said to them that though she could excuse the thief and the intruder, it was not possible to break her promise; unless and until he could defeat her in scholarship there was absolutely no hope for him. Sundara readily accepted the challenge and there followed a discussion in Kavya, Nyaya, Dharmasastra, Philosophy and all other subjects of human knowledge. At every turn Vidya was brought to bay by the intellectual acumen and profound scholarship of the prince and when so vanquished, she had a smile for him, which coupled with the glances that they stole at each other's face, invested her defeat on the field with a sense of conquest over the heart of her antagonist and lover. Vidya now acknowledged that she was defeated and that she saw no objection to her being united to him in marriage, true to her promise. Among the various systems of marriage of the Hindus there is the *Gandharva vivaha* or marriage in secret which makes the vows sacred and legal by mutual election of the bridegroom and the bride. No priest or third party is required to minister to the ceremony,—the only condition required to bring this marriage to a consummation is to exchange garlands of flowers worn by each other. Vidya in great delight took off the floral garland from her neck and offered it to Sundara and Sundara did the same to her. So the marriage was completed. The poets say that Kamadeva or the God of love, unseen by others, discharged the priestly function in this ceremony. The marriage parties consisted of six seasons headed by the spring and tinkling sounds of the ornaments,—the *nupur*, the bracelets, the *kankan* worn by maids, sounded the musical notes to consummate the event.

The defeat and marriage in secret.

Thus Vidya and Sundara met every night. The maids connived and nothing was known about the marriage by the Raja or his queen. Even in day-time they met, for Vidya had a compartment in the palace all reserved for herself, and her parents visited her only occasionally, and when they did so they generally sent previous informations of their visit. Chapter after chapter is devoted by Bharat Chandra to describing the manœuvre of the husband and wife to give pleasure to each other by surprise-visits and by every form of play imaginable in which the young couple indulged to their hearts' content. Raja Vira Sinha continued now and then to send information to his daughter about the ascetic till waiting as suitor for her hand, but Vidya would not listen to it. She declared that she would lead the holy life of a nun and had despaired of marriage as no prince could yet defeat her in scholarship. The ascetic as I have said, was no other than Sundara himself, who passed his days in the city in the garb of an ascetic, with the object of avoiding attention as he was ostensibly without any occupation. The prince and the princess in the meantime both insisted whenever they met Hira, the flower-woman, on her helping them to have an interview with each other, and the poor woman was at her wit's end to devise some plan for their doing so. She was completely ignorant of the affair that was going on *subrosa*.

The maids of Vidya were alarmed to find that the princess was *enceinte* so that the fact of her marriage could not be longer concealed from her royal parents. In great dismay they discussed among themselves what was to be done at this crisis. It was settled that the matter should be brought to the notice of the queen; for the disclosure of the circumstances through other sources, which was inevitable, would expose them to the risk of losing their lives, as they would be implicated in a share of the guilt. They would not disclose Sundara's name but would bring the matter itself to the queen's notice—a course to which Vidya had reluctantly to give her consent, as there was no other alternative.

Concealment no longer safe.

The queen heard of it ; she visited the princess, and after vainly attempting to extort the right information from her and rebuking her as best as she could, asked the maids to disclose the name of the person who was so bold as to violate the sanctity of the royal *zenana*; but they washed their hands clean of all knowledge about any one and maintained a determined silence, in answer to all enquiries on this point. In a great rage the queen approached the Raja, who was taking his afternoon nap at the time; the maids in attendance, were waiting with *chamars* and fans—standing silently like painted figures by his bed-side. The queen in a violent paroxysm of anger flew into the royal apartments and the tinkling sound of her *nupur* awoke the king who was surprised to find her in such a condition.

The exasperated queen.

She related the story to the Raja declaring him to be quite unfit to hold the sceptre since such a thing could happen in his own palace. The police staff was worthless, if they allowed a thief to enter the royal *zenana* and perpetrate such a heinous crime under the king's nose, what safety was there for the life and property of the poor people living in his dominion?

The Raja convened his court immediately. The chief officer of police came trembling before the enraged chief, and Vira Sinha after relating the story said, "You base-born fellow, there will be one grave dug into which you and your children will be thrown if you cannot detect the thief." The officer with folded palms asked for seven days to make an enquiry and find out the thief. The Raja granted him the time saying, if on the expiry of seven days, the thief should not be brought to his presence, the officer would lose his head and his children would all be killed.

The police officer's danger.

The police officer commenced operations of a thorough inspection of the palace. Vidya was made to leave her apartment, and the police people flocked to see through what passage a thief might enter the house in spite of such a strong body of

guards. It took them no time to discover the hole—the passage made by Sundara. They entered the hole but came back feeling as if the vaults of hell were open,—there was no passage of light or air; the gloom that pervaded it overawed them and choked them. The bravest of them repeated his attempts several times and as many times came back apprehending the approach of a venomous snake or some devil. Dhumaketu the Inspector pronounced it to be a hole made by a serpent and Yamaketu, another officer of the staff, said that it must have been made by some black spirit. Whatever it might be, they were unanimous in their opinion that in all probability that was the passage used by the thief. They all sat round the hole and contemplated the best method of carrying on a sifting investigation as to where it could lead. They thought of excavating the whole ground covered by it, but that course would require such an extensive operation through the hard ground-floor of the palace that seven days might not suffice for finishing the work. Kalaketu, a police officer, said :—Brethren, let us wait here in the disguise of maids; the thief may come of himself to visit the princess."

This idea was accepted by all. They brought various dresses and ornaments from the Raja's theatrical stock. One of them who had a charming face put on the dress similar to that of Vidya and twelve officers disguised themselves as twelve maids decorating themselves with great skill in order to practise the deception successfully. Thirteen men belonging to the police staff had thus stationed themselves in the apartments of Vidya. Sona Ray and Rup Ray, the chief officers, sat at the main gates leading to the palace. There were 28 minor gates and as many police inspectors guarded them with a vigilant watch. One of the old women belonging to the family of a police inspector, who used to wear a red coloured *sari* and a garland of *java* flowers round her neck, visited every house on some pretext or other, and employed her maidens on a similar mission, making enquiries of the women-folk of the town to get a clue to trace the thief. A thorough search was made of the incoming and outgoing boats

and all arrivals and departures were subjected to a most careful search.

Vidya could find no possible way to send information to Sundara, as her apartments were occupied by officers of the detective department. The police were trying to detect a thief, that was all that the people knew: no inkling as to a guilty connection with the royal *zenana* was obtained by any outsider, and Sundara had no thought of all this investigation having been aimed at the detection of his crime.

As usual dressed in his best attire,—scented with *atar* extracted from the rose and jessamine, with his turban and apparel sparkling with diamonds—his head full of love's reveries, Sundara entered the subterranean passage in the evening and appeared at the other end of the hole. The police officers looked at one another and smiled. Sundara could not recognise them in the dim light which the police had purposely kept in the apartments. He sat smiling by the side of one who wore Vidya's dress and attempted the gay amours with her to which he was accustomed; but the false lady hid her face behind the veil and would not show any sign of reciprocating his warm sentiments,—at which he feared she was angry with him for some unknown cause. The prince looked helplessly around, and asked the maids to intervene in his behalf to make his lady-love as kind to him as she had ever been. The maids responded to his call and all at once seized him—his lady-love also was not slow in joining her maids in according him the reception which a thief deserved at the hands of the police.

The flower-woman in the trap.

In the meantime some of the officers groped in the darkness of the subterranean passage, attempting to discover the residence of the arch-thief whose daring and ingenuity was so great as to have outwitted the whole staff of guards. They were no longer afraid of the devil dwelling in the cell, nor of snakes, since they had seen the thief entering Vidya's apartments through it with his fine apparel, nothing soiled by the dirt of the cell. They had to go a long way before they saw the region of the sun and the moon,

and it so happened that the first light they saw, discovered to their eyes a charming *bungalow* which was familiar to them all, as forming part of the house of Hira the flower-woman. The faded beauty, whose face showed a strange combination of wrinkles and loveliness, was dragged out of her room and belaboured for giving shelter to a thief and helping him to dig a passage under the earth. Hira swore by all that was holy to her,—by her father's name—by the name of Raja Vira Sinha and by the head of Sona Ray, the chief officer of the police, that all was a mystery to her and that she knew nothing of such developments in her house and in the palace. Dhumaketu remarked:—"How could the thief have the knowledge of Vidya's apartments, if you did not draw a map for him, you old hag?" They bound her in chains and drove her like an animal to the palace.

Raja Vira Sinha sat on his throne to pronounce his judgment on the daring thief who appeared to him to be a remarkable man, and whose performance sounded like a romance. Sundara was brought before him bound in chains; the courtiers felt the influence of the charm of his personality. He appeared perfectly indifferent to his fate, and with a stately demeanour approached the throne. He was more handsome than all the princes that had stood as suitors for the hands of the princess. Raja Vira Sinha felt compunction at the noble sight of the young man who would be welcome as his son-in-law, if only his birth, status in life, and learning, had qualified him for the high honour, and if he had not stooped to the wicked device of a thief for winning the heart of his pretty daughter. The sword of the chief officer of police was unsheathed and it stood ready awaiting only the command of the king to sever the head of the thief from his body before all the assembled court. The Raja asked the young man to relate his story,—who he was, what was his father's name and why he stooped to such a mean device for gaining the princess. Sundara said in a half-humorous tone, "My name is Vidyapati (lit. husband of Vidya), my father's name is father-in-law of Vidya, my home is in Vidya-

The prevarications of Sundara before the Raja

nagar (village of the name of Vidya) and I belong to the caste of Vidya." The offended chief was angry beyond measure at the audacity of the man, and the chief officer of the police wanted permission to kill him on the spot, but the chief by a glance cast secretly at the officer forbade him to do so. The more the Raja tried to bring the thief to a confession of his guilt as also to giving an account of himself, the more did he frustrate him by ingenious replies, and at last recited 50 *slokas* composed by himself, *extempore*, in which he described his love to Vidya, but these *slokas* (in Sanskrit) which are found in the Vidya-Sundara of Bharat Chandra and are well known as "Chora Panchasata" could also be interpreted as signifying praises in honour of the Goddess Kali. They have double meaning. The Raja was struck by this display of erudition and felt that he was no ordinary person, but as he persisted in his waywardness, at last gave orders to take him away from his sight and lead him to the place of execution.

Order for execution.

The handsomest young man that ever met the eyes of men in Burdwan, being cruelly bound hand and foot, was being carried to the execution-ground and the citizens that witnessed the scene felt sorrow and sympathy for the prince, especially the women-folk who made all kinds of reflections, some of which were not in good taste, as many of them expressed in an unreserved language their envy at the good fortune of Vidya in having possessed him. These descriptions do not really represent the Hindu women whose natural shyness would scarcely allow them to overstep the limits of decency in such a gross manner. We have in our literature of to-day feminine characters like Ayesa and Kunda-nandini—imitations of Rebecca and Haidee, who though they do not actually come in gowns and bodices, display the heart of European maids through the thin cover of Indian *sari*. The feminine characters depicted in Vidya-Sundara and the ideas attributed to them are similarly foreign to us. They unmistakably show the stamp of the influence which the literature of an alien people left on our own.

Saved by the Mother.

Sundara being taken to the execution ground, prays to Kali for succour. The story of Srimanta Sadagar repeats itself here. Sundara prays to Kali invoking her by names which begin with each of the 34 letters of the Bengali alphabet. He receives the never-falling help of the Mother: a great army of ghosts come and bind the king's army with chains.

In the court of the Raja the bird *suka* communicated a strange story. It told the Raja that the thief was no other than the far-famed prince of Kanchi, Sundara, whose learning, handsome appearance and martial acquirements were the pride of Southern India. The Raja asked *suka* as to why he did not give an account of who he was, though he was repeatedly asked to do so. The bird said, it was not the custom with a prince to give an account of himself, the royal ambassador introduced him to Rajas of those countries which he might happen to visit. The ambassador Gangabhata had been sent to Kanchi to proclaim the challenge of Vidya in that city and he was called in. After making obeisance to the Raja he said in reply to the query put to him about the prince,—"The prince of Kanchi has the title of Mahakavi or great poet, because he possesses poetical powers in an uncommon degree. I saw him at Kanchi; than him a more handsome prince does not exist in the world; when he heard of the beauty of Vidya and of the challenge she had offered, he suddenly disappeared from the city and since then nothing is known of him. His royal parents in great distress sent messengers everywhere to make enquiries about his whereabouts. But so long as I was there he did not return. It is not unlikely that he has come to Burdwan."

The story told by *suka* confirmed by Gangabhata.

Sundara identified.

The Raja sent the ambassador to the execution-ground to identify the thief if he was really the prince. Gangabhata came back forthwith and declared that the thief was the prince, to whom he had, while at Kanchi, delivered the letter of challenge.

The Raja himself went to the execution-ground. There he saw his army mysteriousiy bound with chains and unable to speak, and the prince in an attitude of prayer looking up to heaven. He seemed so completely resigned that he looked like a beautiful statue placed there to dispel the horror of the execution-ground. The Raja went and embraced him as his son-in-law, and by the grace of Kali the royal army was released from the chains and was once more set free.

Marriage and public festivities

The marriage of Vidya and Sundara had already taken place according to the *Gandharva* system,—the ritual of which consisted only in the exchange of flower-garlands between the couple as a sign of their mutual selection of each other, and the public ceremouy was now performed with great *eclat*. Sundara after having stayed at Burdwan for some time went to Kanchi with his wife Vidya and lived many long years in happiness. Nor must we omit to say that during the marriage festivities Hira the flower-woman was released and rewarded by Raja Vira Sinha.

The flower-woman rewarded

—o—

(*d*) *Early poets of the Vidya-Sundara poems*

The story is an old one.

The oldest Vidya-Sundara that we have been able to secure, was written by Govinda Das in 1595 A. D. The poet was born at Deogram in Chittagong and belonged to the Atriya Gotra, and to the line of Naradas who was probably a Kayastha. It appears that there had been previous poems on Vidya-Sundara from which our author drew his materials. We find in the Brahmakhanda of the Bhavisya Purana* the story of Vidya-Sundara described at some length in racy Sanskrit verses. It is wrong to suppose that

* According to Wilson, Brahmakhanda was composed shortly after 1550 A. D. See Indian Antiquary, Vol. XX, p. 419 (1891).

Bharat Chandra was the first to connect the story with the Burdwan Raj family and that he did so to satisfy a private grudge. In the Brahmakhanda we find mention not only of Burdwan as the place of occurrence of its incidents but also of Raja Vira Sinha; and Rama Prasad whose Vidya-Sundara is earlier, as well places the scene in Burdwan. Besides these, in the Padmavati by Alaol we find a reference to the underground passage dug by Sundara which proves that the tradition of the story had existed in the country for a long time. The mould in which it was subsequently cast by Bharat Chandra and other poets of his school bears the mark of Muhammadan influence. Govinda Das's poem was free from those vulgarities which are now associated with the story, owing to the way in which Bharat Chandra dealt with it. But Govinda Das wrote in a highly Sanskritised style and in this respect had affinities with subsequent schools of poets. The following passage shows the sort of style which now came gradually into favour and from which it is so hard to translate, owing to the fact that its merits lie wholly in its literary art :—

Govind Das, 1595 A.D.

A hymn to Siva.

"* All praise be to the Lord of gods, Siva,—the saviour of the world. Many salutations do I offer to thy lotus-feet. The stream of the Ganges adorns thy locks,—the moon is thy crown;—garlands of flowers and snakes coiled into the form of wreaths adorn thy neck and soft curls of hair hang loose and touch thy ears. Thy three eyes though half shut gleam fiercely, and the lustre of thy body is like unto a silver mountain. O Thou, the destroyer of the

* "জয় দেবনাথ জগত-তারণ চরণ-সরোরুহে বহু মিনতি।
সুরনদী চন্দ্রিম-মুকুট মাল-ভূষণ ফনিমালকুন্তল মোহে শ্রুতি॥
টলমল ত্রিনয়ন-জ্বাল আধমিলন রজত-ধরাধর অঙ্গছাতি।
স্মররিপু-ত্রিপুরহরদাহন অবহেলন সীমবরণ শিবযোগপতি॥
বিলসতি যোগভোগ ভববাসন দীনশরণ জয় গৌরীপতি॥"

Kalika Mangal by Govinda Das.

enemies of the gods and of the god of love,—Thou Prince of ascetics, regaling thyself in the joy of Yoga, thou Lord of Gauri—thy humble votary pays his worship unto thee."

Govinda Das was of a religious turn of mind and often his reflections are worthy of one versed in Vedanta philosophy. Here are a few lines :—

†"As one sees the reflection of himself in a mirror, so is Kali reflected in the universe. All emanate from her and pass into her, just as the waters of the sea rising to the sky fill the streams and rivers with rain and flow back to the sea."

Vedantic ideas.

After Govinda Das the next writer of Vidya-Sundara that we have been able to trace is Krisnaram. He was a Kayastha by caste, born at Nimta a village close to Belgharia, a station on the East Bengal Railway. Krisnaram's Vidya-Sundara was written in the year 1686 A. D.

Krisnaram. 1686 A. D.

Of Ksemananda's Vidya-Sundara—the date of composition is quite unknown. It is evidently very old to judge from the hand-writing of the incomplete manuscript that has been obtained.

Ksemananda.

Vidya-Sundara by Madhusudan Kavindra—The story is told very briefly in the poem. The date of composition is not known.

Madhusudan.

Vidya-Sundara by Rama Prasad Sen.

Rama Prasad was that great saint and poet of the 18th century whose name is known and revered throughout Bengal. Whatever was the cause, this saintly poet conceived the whim of writing the indecent story of Vidya-Sundara. His poem was the model

Rama Prasad.

† "প্রতিবিম্ব দেখি যেন দরপণ তারা।
সংসারের যত দেখ সেইত শরীরা॥
সমুদ্রের জল যেন নদ নদী ভরে।
সেই জল পুনরপি মিশায় সাগরে॥"
Kalika Mangal by Govinda Das.

which inspired Bharat Chandra to write in a similar strain. Rama Prasad was favoured by Raja Krisna Chandra as appears from the grant of 100 bighas of rent-free land, which was conferred on him by the Raja in 1785 A. D. It may have been under court-influence or due to some juvenile poetic freak that Rama Prasad set his hand to the task of writing a poem for which nature had not fitted him. He has been outdone by Bharat Chandra whose poem of Vidya-Sundara far excels the one he wrote. But Rama Prasad in his vulgarities, his pedantry, and other faults of the age was not a whit behind his more successful rival. The details of vulgar and indecent love which are found in Bharat Chandra's poem were all anticipated by Rama Prasad, and in fact the former seems in such matters to have taken his cue from him. Bharat Chandra gave a finish to the style by a harmony of expression which Rama Prasad had sought for in vain.

Failure of Rama Prasad in Sanskritic style.

Though himself a learned scholar and Sanskritist, Rama Prasad scarcely shows a musical ear in this work. His efforts to introduce high sounding Sanskritic words are far from happy: they remind us of the attempts of the elephant to please Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, as described by Milton :—

> "The unweildy elephant,
> To make them mirth, used all his might, and wreathed
> His lithe proboscis."

The style of Rama Prasad is made cumbrous by Sanskritic expressions, such as :—

* "সহজে কলঙ্কী সে তবাস্য সম নহে"
† "জলস্থলে চাস্তরীক্ষে"
"ক্ষেপ করে দশ দিক্ লোষ্ট্রবিবর্ত্তনে"
‡ "পূর্ণচন্দ্র শোভা যেন পিবতি চকোর"

* "The moon is spotted and so cannot bear comparison with your face."
† "In water, on land and in the sky."
‡ "As if the beauty of the full moon were drunk by the bird *Chakora*."

§ "আগত ভানু রজনী চলি যায়।
বারে বারে ডাকে রাণী, জাগৃহি, জাগৃহি
উঠ উঠ প্রাণ গৌরী, এই নিকটে গিরি,
এবমুচিতমধুনা তব নহি নহি।
স্তুতমাগধ বন্দী কৃতাঞ্জলি কথয়তি
নিদ্রা জহিহি জহিহি।"

As the above is quoted to show how the poet fails to produce an effect by his high-sounding words, a translation is hardly called for, though I give one in the foot-note. The words 'তবান্ত,' 'দিক্ষু,' 'চান্তরীক্ষে,' 'পিবতি,' 'জাগৃহি,' 'এবমুচিতমধুনা,' 'কথয়তি' and 'জহিহি' are pure Sanskrit forms and though Bengali is now a highly Sanskritised dialect, the above forms could have no chance of being introduced into our written language.

These passages show a curious medley of Sanskrit and Bengali words and remind us of the similar style of Krisna Das Kaviraja's Chaitanya-Charitamrita.

Bharat Chandra and Rama Prasad—a contrast.

Bharat Chandra destroyed the temple of fame which Rama Prasad had erected for himself in the poem of Vidya-Sundara, and with those materials raised one to glorify himself. He is so profusely indebted to the preceding poet that there is scarcely a line in Rama Prasad's poem, the ring of which is not echoed in Bharat Chandra's work. Yet the latter produces such a singular effect by harmony of words, that Rama Prasad, upon whose work he draws freely for materials, must be satisfied with the wages of a day-labourer while Bharat would claim the reward of the artist who creates a master-piece. I quote below* extracts

§ "The sun is rising and the night goes away. O my Uma, awaken. There stands your father. You should not behave so. The bards and singers with closed palms are singing 'arise, awake from your sleep.'"

A description of Vidya's beauty.

* "ডুবিল কুরঙ্গশিশু মুখেন্দুসুধায়
লুপ্তপ্রায় তত্রনাত্র নেত্র দেখা যায়॥
নাভিপদ্ম পরিহরি মত্ত মধুপান।
ক্রমে ক্রমে বাড়িল বারণ কুম্ভস্থান॥

"কাড়ি নিল মৃগমদ নয়ন হিল্লোলে।
কাঁদেরে কলঙ্কী চাঁদ মৃগলয়ে কোলে॥
নাভিপদ্মে যেতে কাম কুচশম্ভু বলে।
ধরিল কুন্তল তার রোমাবলী ছলে॥

from both poems, and place them side by side to show to what extent the one has drawn upon the other. I shall not attempt a translation of the passages into English, as no sense could be imparted without elaborate annotations of such words as 'চন্দনসময়,' 'কুচশম্ভু,' 'মৃগমদ,' 'উলু,' etc., and even by such notes the affinity of the passages in point of language could not be fully conveyed to readers unacquainted with the niceties of our tongue.

Rama Prasad.

But Rama Prasad was a great poet, greater in many respects than Bharat Chandra. His other works, to which we shall have to refer hereafter, have made landmarks in the history of our literary and spiritual thought. He was a seer and a saint, and though he was beaten in his juvenile attempts to compose a love-poem, he shortly after achieved fame by his songs, which have immortalised him in

কিবা লোমাবলী ছলে বিধি-বিচক্ষণ।
যৌবন কৈশোর দ্বন্দ্ব করিল ভঞ্জন॥
কোন বা বড়াই কাম পঞ্চ শরভূণে।
কত কোটি খর শর সে নয়ন কোণে॥"
Rama Prasad.

কে বলে শারদ শশী সে মুখের তুলা।
পদনখে পড়ে তার আছে কতগুলা॥
কেবা করে কামশরে কটাক্ষের সম।
কটুতায় কোটি কোটি কালকূট সম॥"
Bharat Chandra.

Marriage under Gandharva form

"উত্তম ঘটক সুন্দরের গাঁথা হার।
বরকর্ত্তা কন্যাকর্ত্তা চিত্ত দোঁহাকার॥
পুরোহিত হইলেন আপনি মদন।
বিদ্যালাপছলে বুঝি পড়াল বচন॥
উলু দিছে ঘন ঘন পিক সীমন্তিনী।
নয়ন চকোর সুখে নাচিছে নাচনি॥
বরযাত্র মলয় পবন বিধুবর।
মধুকর নিকর হইল বাদ্যকর॥
উভয়তঃ কুটুম্ব রসনা ওষ্ঠাধর।
পরস্পর ভুঞ্জে সুধা মুখেন্দু উপর॥
নূপুর কিঙ্কিণী জালে নানা শব্দ হয়।
দুই দলে দ্বন্দ্ব যেন চন্দন সময়॥
সস্ত্রীক আইলা কাম দেখিতে কৌতুক।
দম্পতীরে পঞ্চশর দিলেক যৌতুক॥"
Rama Prasad.

"বিবাহ নহিলে হয় কেমনে বিহার।
গন্ধর্ব্ব বিবাহ হইল মনে আঁখি ঠার॥
কন্যাকর্ত্তা হইল কন্যা বরকর্ত্তা বর।
পুরোহিত ভট্টাচার্য্য হইল পঞ্চশর॥
কন্যাযাত্র বরযাত্র ঋতু ছয় জন।
বাদ্যকরে বাদ্যকর কিঙ্কিণী কঙ্কণ॥
নৃত্যকরে বেসরে নূপুরে গীত গায়।
আপনি আসিয়া রতি এয়ো হল তায়।
ধিক ধিক অধিক আছিল সখি তায়।
নিশ্বাস আতস বাজি উত্তাপে পলায়॥
নয়ন অধর কর জঘন চরণ।
দুঁহার কুটুম্ব সুখে করিছে ভোজন॥"
Bharat Chandra.

Bengal and made him dear to the heart of every Bengali. We need not regret that he failed in his attempt to say an artificial thing, for his soul was artless. It is well that he was defeated in his effort to win precedence in a court where scurrility reigned;—the pity is that he soiled his hands by such an attempt to pander to the vitiated taste of the age. He was a scholar, but it is only when he forgets vain-glorious erudition, that he displays himself in his best and most favourable aspects. He was a finished litterateur and the language he had at his command was rich and varied, though he was not happy in his attempts to mingle Sanskrit and Bengali. It is when he appears as a child and uses the child's language, singing songs that welled up in his heart out of the exuberance of his devotional feeling,—when he sees the Divine mother in nature and forgets everything else saying—"Enough, O mother! Like the bee attracted by a painted flower, have I roved amongst the vain pleasures of the world. Enough have I tasted, I desire no more. Now the evening has come. It is the dusk of the evening. O mother, take this thy child, to thyself."*—that he appeals irresistibly to the heart. Each line of his songs throbs with the deep yearning of the soul. We shall deal with them hereafter. Rama Prasad himself said truly in one of his songs,† "My poems will crumble into dust but I shall live in my songs." Even as a child plays at being a soldier in dress that passes for a soldier's uniform, and, soldier-like, brandishes his little sword, but when he becomes weary, runs to

His Songs.

"রাজা বলে কাট চোরে যশানে
বাবাই।
আঁখি ঠেরে আর বার করে নিবারণ॥"
Rama Prasad.

"চাহে কাটিতে কোটাল, চাহে কাটিতে
কোটাল।
নয়ন ঠারিয়া বারণ করে মহীপাল॥"
Bharat Chandra.

* "বৃথা আশা চিত্রের পদ্মেতে পড়ি ভ্রমর ভুলে র'ল।
যা হবার তা হ'ল এখন সন্ধ্যা হল
কোলের ছেলে মা কোলে নিয়ে চল॥"

† "গ্রন্থ যাবে গড়াগড়ি পানে হব বাস্ত।"
Rama Prasad.

his mother, all covered as he is with the dust of the play-ground, and there in his natural aspect looks most lovely, so did Rama Prasad—sick of the false play of pedantry which had occupied him for a while but had not really satisfied him—run at the close of the heyday of his worldly career, to seek his Divine mother's grace. He now soothed his heart, vexed with the world's turmoil, with songs, which, with their deep-toned melancholy and their resignation to the divine mercy, ring out even now in the villages of Bengal. There is no rustic, no old man, and no woman in Bengal who has not drawn a truly inspired consolation from them in hours when the wrongs and sorrows of the world were like to bruise the heart and make it heavy-laden.

(c) *Bharat Chandra Ray Gunakara*—the great poet of the Eighteenth Century.

A short time after Rama Prasad's Vidya-Sundara was composed, Bharat Chandra described the same story in his poem, called the Annada Mangal, which at once rose to the highest point of fame and popularity, throwing into the shade all the earlier works on the subject.

His Life.

Bharat Chandra Ray was born in the year 1722. A.D., at Peron Basantapur in the district of Hooghly. His father Narendra Narayan Ray was a *Zaminder* of the place and had obtaind the title Raja from the Nawab of Murshidabad. There arose a dispute between Narendra Ray and the Raja of Burdwan on a boundary question and the former is said to have given offence to the independent chief by a public mention of Visnu Kumari, his queen. Two Rajput soldiers named Alam Chandra and Ksema Chandra were sent by the angry Raja to chastise Narendra Ray. They were accompanied by a number of armed men who took all the lands belonging to Raja Narendra Narayan by force and ousted him from his possessions, allowing him to retain his hold on his homestead only. Narendra Ray was, as may be understood, reduced

to great poverty after this event. His son Bharat Chandra stayed with his maternal uncles at Noapara and prosecuted his studies in a Sanskrit *tol* at Tajpur. When only fourteen, he married a girl of the Kesarkuni family of Brahmins at Sarada (a village in Pargana Mandalghata) whose status in society was much inferior to his own—in the face of great opposition from his parents and brothers. They were not prepared to receive him or his bride at their house; so the young fellow came to Devanandapur in the district of Hooghly and sought the favour of a wealthy Kayastha named Ram Chandra Munshi who accorded him a warm reception, being pleased with his talents. He learned Persian at his place and on an occasion of worship of the god Satya Narayan composed a short poem in honour of the deity, which greatly pleased the audience. This poem was composed in 1737 A.D., when Bharat Chandra was only fifteen. At this time his parents permitted him to return home though they would not allow his wife to come with him. He came back to his family-residence and was deputed by his father to settle certain questions about their landed property with the Raja of Burdwan. But for some reason or other Bharat Chandra was thrown into prison by the Raja for a few months. On being released he felt a desire to visit the Jagannath temple of Puri. Arriving at the shrine he met with a warm treatment from some of the *Pandas* who were delighted with his learning. He was greatly impressed with Vaisnavism at the time and is said to have taken into his head the idea of turning ascetic and leading a holy life in the Vrinda groves. With this object he marched bare-footed, but the village Khanakul lay in his way, where a relation of his wife stopped him and by persuasive arguments, the force of which he took no time in appreciating, brought the young aspirant for a holy life to the village Sarada where his wife lived. The Vrinda groves with the vision of God, that had inspired the poet,

Troubles owing to marriage.

A poem on Satya-Narayan, 1737 A.D.

Thrown into prison.

In the company of his wife.

melted away like mist from his imagination, and in the village of Sarada he found a metal more attractive where he spent some time in the company of his young wife.

Our poet next came to Farasdanga where a Zamindar named Indra Narayan Chaudhuri took some interest in him and introduced him to Raja Krisna Chandra of Navadvipa. This Raja, who, as already said, was a great patron of letters, discovered in the young man poetical talents of an extraordinary order and immediately appointed him as his court-poet on a pay of Rs. 40 a month.* The clouds that had gathered over his fortune, now passed away and he met with sunny days. His Annada Mangal was composed by the command of Raja Krisna Chandra. The book was completed in 1752 A.D. About this time he built a new home at Mulajore—a village which was shortly after leased by Raja Krisna Chandra to one Ramadeb Nag. This man was very exacting and our poet was sore troubled by his growing demands. He wrote 8 couplets in Sanskrit describing the oppression of Ramadeb Nag, the naive humour of which so greatly pleased the Raja that he granted to his favourite poet 105 *bighas* of rent-free land at Gusta in Pargana Amalpur and 16 *bighas* more at Mulajore. Bharat Chandra died of diabetes in 1760 A.D., three years after the English had won the battle of Plassey. He was decorated with the title of Rai Gunakara by Raja Krisna Chandra.

Introduced to Krisna Chandra.

Annada Mangal in 1752.

105+16 bighas of land.

Death in 1760 A.D.

Bharat Chandra's Annada Mangal was at one time so popular in Bengal, that there was scarcely a young man or young woman with any pretentions to learning who could not reproduce passages from it. The story of Vidya-Sundara was popularised

The popularity of Vidya-Sundara.

* It was not all meagre at the time, Warren Hasting's pay as a Member of Council being Rs. 200 a month in 1764.

by his work to such an extent that our popular theatres called *yatras* at one time rang with the songs of Vidya and Sundara. The long poetical descriptions did not suit the *yatras*, so Gopal Uriya, a famous *Yatrawalla* of later times took the cue from Bharat Chandra's writings and composed short and light songs based on the text of his poem, which became very popular in the country. In these *yatras* the dance of Hira, the flower-woman, was a point of great interest. We may quote the following song as a specimen :—

Adopted in *yatras*.

*"It is so curious that a handsome man like you is in quest of lodgings. There are many lotuses to receive the bee, why should there not be many hearts to welcome thee! Hear me, O youngman, when I pluck flowers, the bees fly around me—that is the pleasure that keeps me at Burdwan."

The prince is brought to the house of Hira where he constantly harps on Vidya; the flower-woman again sings †"What a foolish youngman! He constantly says, 'aunt, give me my Vidya.' Is she a jewel that a woman can keep tied in the end of her *sari* and produce on demand!" These songs and hundreds of such, attributed to Gopal Uriya and other *Yatrawallas*, were once in every man's mouth. Their inspiration came direct from Bharat Chandra. In fact the depraved atmosphere of towns, directly affected by court-influence on the eve of the downfall of the Muhammadan power, Vidya-Sundara became the craze of the young dilettantes of Bengal who revelled in the literature of sensualism.

* "হায়রে দশা কি তামাসা বাসার জন্ত ভাবছ কেনে।
হৃদ্‌কমলে দিতে বাসা আশা করে কতই জনে॥
শুন নাগর তোমায় বলি, নিত্য নিত্য কুসুম তুলি,
সঙ্গে সঙ্গে ফিরে অলি, এই সুখে থাকি বর্দ্ধমানে॥"

A song sung in Gopal Uriya's *yatra*.

† "কোথাকার হাবা ছেলে হাসি পায় শুনে,
সদা বলে কই মাসি তুই বিদ্যা দিলিনে,
আঁচলে কি বাঁধা আছে দিব তা এনে?"

Sung in Gopal Uriya's *yatra*.

The contents of Annada Mangal.

The Annada Mangal by Bharat Chandra, of which Vidya-Sundara forms a part, is divided into three parts: The first part is devoted to the sacrifice performed by Daksa, the death of Sati, her rebirth as Uma, her marriage with Siva and subsequent domestic scenes at Kailas. It also describes the futile attempt of the sage Vyasa to build a second Benares, with the object of thwarting the God Siva, and gives account of Harihora and Bhabananda Majumdar—ancestors of Raja Krisna Chandra. The second part describes the story of Vidya-Sundara. The last part is devoted to a description of the wars of Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore with Man Sinha, the Governor of Bengal, the eventual defeat and death of Raja Pratapaditya, and further accounts of Bhabananda Majumdar, who helped Man Sinha in his fight with the Raja; it also describes Bhabananda's visit to Delhi where he is said to have held a heated controversy on religion with Jahangir, who in a great rage ordered him to be imprisoned. An account is also given of his release from prison and of the emoluments he received from the emperor.

His other works.

Besides Annada Mangal, Bharat Chandra wrote Rasamanjari in Bengali, in which he classifies feminine emotions and gives illustrations in imitation of Sanskrit works on Rhetoric. is incomplete drama, called the Chandinataka, shows a curious admixture of Sanskrit, Bengali and Persian, proving that he was a finished master of the three languages. There are many short pieces besides the above, which Bharat Chandra wrote on various subjects.

Onomato-poetic expressions.

One of the elements which we find in profusion in Bharat Chandra's poetry is a liking for onomato-poetic expressions. A richness of sound is sometimes lent to his lines by a harmonious assemblage of words not to be found in any vocabulary, yet nevertheless, conveying sense by the imitation of natural sounds. This is made very effective to the ear by the clever manipulation of the poet. Bharat Chandra had a store-house of such words; he

revelled in them ; they were often coined by him; but he is nowhere unmeaning as he always took his cue from natural sounds. It would be impossible to translate words which do not occur in any vocabulary. I shall quote a passage here, in the translation of which I cannot help introducing the very sounds which the poet imitates, and the effect of which would be lost in a different language. The piece describes the dance of Siva at the time of the final dissolution of the universe.

"Siva assumes the form of the great destroyer, the sound of his horn is terrible—*bhabham bham bhabham bham*. His matted locks shake to and fro— *latapat-latapat*, and the murmuring stream of the Ganges flows—*chalacchal, talattal, kalakkal* through them. The snakes hiss—*phanaphan phaniphan* and the moon on his forehead burns like the sun: fire issues from it—*dhakdhvak dhakdhvak*; and from his mouth come the deep sounds *bhabham bham bhabham bham*. The naked ghosts and goblins dance—*tadhia-tadhia*."

A word in explanation of these lines:—Siva the god of destruction is represented as having the moon on his forehead; the Ganges flows from his locks. The popular belief of the Hindus is that the Ganges originates from the feet of the God Visnu and its stream is caught by Brahma in his *kamandalu* (water-pot). Thence it flows down to the matted locks of Siva and thence it comes down to the earth.

"মহারুদ্র রূপে মহাদেব সাজে।
ভভম্ভম্ ভভম্ভম্ শিঙ্গা ঘোর বাজে॥
লটাপট্ জটাজুট সংঘট গঙ্গা।
ছলচ্ছল্-টলট্টল্-কলকল তরঙ্গা॥
ফণাফণ্ ফণাফণ ফণীফণ গাজে।
দিনেশ প্রতাপে নিশানাথ সাজে॥
ধকধ্বক্ ধকধ্বক্ অনল বহ্নি ভালে।
ভভম্ভম্ ভভম্ভম্ মহাশব্দ গালে॥
ধিয়া তাধিয়া তাধিয়া ভূত নাচে।
উলঙ্গী উলঙ্গে পিশাচী পিশাচে।"

Bharat Chandra's Annada Mangal.

The words *chalacchal*, *kalakkal* and *talattal* in the fourth line, which refer to the waves of the Ganges, are singularly happy. *Chalacchal* in the colloquial dialect seems to signify a flow, *talattal* transparency, and *kalakkal* the sweet murmur of the waves. Three onomato-poetic words not to be found in the Bengali vocabulary have thus been strung together in the same line, to suggest to the ear three qualities of a stream; a line more happy could not be conceived. The whole of this poem is written in the sublime Sanskrit metre called the Bhujangaprayata. It is to be read with special care to place the proper accents on the vowels. The lines rhyme in measured sounds with a sweet jingle and the whole is an instance of admirable word-painting in poetry.

The tendency to onomatopœia in poetry which was taken from Bharat Chandra, is marked in many later poems, and often the effect produced by such combinations of words is singularly happy, as in the passage given below from Jay Narayan's Harilila.* We refrain from giving an English translation of the piece as it is impossible to convey, even in a small degree, any idea of the sonorous music created by its onomatopoetic expressions.

* "সভামধ্যে রত্নসিংহাসনে নরপতি।
শিরে শ্বেতছত্র ইন্দুকুন্দ জিনি ভাতি॥
ফক্ ফক্ জ্বলে ভস্ম ত্রিপুণ্ড্র ভালে।
মিস্ মিস্ যজ্ঞসূত্র ভ্রমধ্যে জ্বলে॥
টলমল মুকুতা কুণ্ডল কাণে দোলে।
টল্ টল্ গজমতি মালা দোলে গলে॥
কস্ কস্ কসাতা সটুকা কাটিতে।
ঝল্ ঝল্ ঝকমকে স্বর্ণ ঝালরেতে॥
ডগমগ সপ্ত কন্যা চামর লইয়া।
ধীরে ধীরে দোলাইছে রহিয়া রহিয়া॥
ঝন্ ঝন্ লাগে কাণে কঙ্কণের ধ্বনি।
ঝক্‌মক্ চামর দণ্ডেতে জ্বলে মণি॥"

Jay Narayan's Harilila.

The rules of rhyming had not hitherto been strictly followed. As poetry used to be sung, the defects in metrical form were made up for by the tune. But as the domain of poetry gradually separated itself from that of music, the art of poetical composition became gradually more finished, and perfection in rhyme was aimed at by Bharat Chandra and the poets of his school. Hitherto it was held sufficient if the last letters of a couplet rhymed with one another; but the keener perception of the ear now required not only a fulfilment of the above condition, but also an agreement of the vowels preceding the last letters of a rhyming couplet. According to the last principle, rhyming of লোক with অভিষেক, রস with বাস, বনমালা with গেলা, করে with তীরে would be faulty. Among the Vaisnava *Padakarttas*, Govinda Das, whose ear was naturally the most keen to a harmony of sounds, had committed the smallest number of faults in this respect. But perusing closely the Annada Mangal by Bharat Chandra (a poem running over 13000 lines) we scarcely find one instance of disagreement of vowel-sounds in the final syllables of rhyming couplets. One or two examples of this defect are found in his short poem on Satya Narayan which the poet composed when he was only 15 years old. In the whole range of Bengali literature, no poet has shown a finer sense of harmony of sound or a greater skill in the choice of his words than Bharat Chandra. In our own day some poets have followed the principle in rhyming stated above; but in an earlier epoch of the history of our literature, it was Bharat Chandra who held up the torch that lighted the path of subsequent poets,—so all credit is due to him. The Sanskrit metres that Bharat Chandra introduced into his Bengali poems are faultless. As the long and short sounds of vowels are missed in the spoken dialect of Bengal, it required a remarkable power to introduce the measured sounds of noble Sanskrit metres in our tongue, and Bharat Chandra's poems in the Totaka and Bhujangaprayata metres not only show perfect adherence to classical rules, but they flow so easily and with such a natural grace, that no one would doubt, after perusing

Rhyming perfected by Bharat Chandra.

them, that Bengali is a true daughter of Sanskrit, and that a poet who knows the resources of the language can give her a form which would prove her striking affinity in all respects with that of her august parent.

Though it is so difficult to convey to our readers an idea of the beauty of Bharat Chandra's poems, depending, as this does, on a singularly happy arrangement of words, we here attempt a translation of one passage of remarkable elegance :—*"While the cuckoos sang and the bees hummed about the *bakula* flowers, the Goddes Annapurna sat in a jewelled shrine. A stream of cool and lotus-scented water overflowed its banks and the waves danced to the melody of the air. The Spring season had arrayed himself like a prince, and accompanied by the six modes of music had taken up his abode beneath the *asoka* tree. Here and there the bees were humming about the flowers, and the god of love had strung his bow. Laughing blossoms gemmed the wood-land bowers. Bharat Chandra was charmed to see the advent of the Spring."

The advent of the Spring.

But the original passage subjoined in the foot-note discovers to us that Bengali is one of the sweetest tongues of the world. The words chosen for this piece chiefly consist of the soft letters *l*, *m*, *n*,—the hissing *s* and the harsh *r* are, generally speaking, omitted from these lines. The poem, when recited with proper accentuation, charms the ear and sounds like music unsung. Many passages of Bharat Chandra afford examples of this decorative art in composition for which Indian genius has a remarkable aptitude.

* "কল কোকিল, অলিকুল বকুল ফুলে।
বসিলা অন্নপূর্ণা মণি দেউলে॥
কমল পরিমল, লয়ে শীতল জল, পবনে টল টল, উছলে কূলে।
বসন্তরাজা আনি, ছয় রাগিণী রাণী করিলা রাজধানী, অশোক মূলে॥
কুসুমে পুনঃ পুনঃ, ভ্রমরে গুনগুন, মদন দিল গুণ, ধনুক হলে।
যতেক উপবন, কুসুম সুশোভন, মধু-মুদিত-মন ভারত ভুলে॥
Bharat Chandra's Annada Mangal.

When Bharat Chandra makes it a point to describe a beautiful woman, the metaphors gleaned from Sanskrit and Persian works cloud his poetic horizon. Niceties become absurdities and his learning stifles the natural flow of sentiment. When, however, a minor character is introduced, on which the poet does not consider it worth while to lavish classical metaphor preferring to trust to his own powers, his sparkling lines produce a far clearer impression. Vidya's beauty, as described by Bharat Chandra, is culled from all that the poet had read in books, and this again is overcoloured by his own monstrous fancy for the purpose of matching the classic poets in their own field. One can scarcely find his way through the thick array of wild and far-fetched similes, and we wonder at the taste which tolerated the unrestrained exaggerations, the wild excesses, and the puerile funs on words which they disclose. But, reserving all his learning for the description of Vidya, the poet draws off-hand a picture of Hira, the flower-woman.

Spoiled by too much attention

Happier in delineating minor characters.

"As the sun set and the night approached, there came along a flower-woman, of the name of Hira (lit. a diamond) whose words indeed sparkled like the diamond. Her teeth were painted; she moved with a pleasant gait, and there was always a smile on her lips. She had been very charming in her youth, and though now grown matronly, she possessed some small traces of her better days."

Hira, the flower-woman.

"সূর্য্য যায় অস্তগিরি আসিল রজনী।
হেন কালে তথা এক আসিলা মালিনী॥
কথায় হীরার ধার হীরা তার নাম।
দাঁত ছোলা বাঙ্গা ছোলা হাস্য অবিরাম॥
আছিল বিস্তর ঠাট প্রথম বয়সে।
এবে বুড়া তবু কিছু গুঁড়া আছে শেষে॥"

Bharat Chandra's Vidya-Sundara.

The lines 'আছিল বিস্তর ঠাট প্রথম বয়সে। এবে বুড়া তবু কিছু গুঁড়া আছে শেষে॥' sparkle with humour, especially in the clever use of the words বুড়া and গুঁড়া. In another passage the line 'অস্ত গেলা রোষ, উদয় রস' (with the setting of resentment, arose grace) indicates the passing away of one emotion and the rise of another, by a happy suggestion of the setting of the sun, followed by the rise of the moon in the sky. There is much beauty in the pun on the words রোষ and রস। There occur innumerable passages of the nature in which the poet skilfully polishes and sets each word, as a jeweller might polish and set a stone in a piece of gold.

We shall here attempt to translate a passage from the Annada Mangal, in which the poet describes a flood that destroyed a considerable part of Man Sinha's army.

The flood.

*** The sky was overcast with dark clouds. The winds began to blow with redoubled force,—the thunder roared,—the lightning flashed,—the wind rustled and the waters splashed. Waves came rushing from all sides: the trees trembled at the sounds of thunder; darkness prevailed, and hails pattered. The outer screens of the Raja's tents were carried away by the winds; people became terror-struck; the huts raised for the soldiers were swept away by the flood which now overtook the camp; elephants were drowned;—carriages were hopelessly wrecked in mud and the camels

* 'দশ দিক আঁধার করিল মেঘগণ।
দুন হয়ে বহে উনপঞ্চাশ পবন॥
ঝঞ্ঝনার ঝঞ্ঝনী, বিদ্যুৎ চকমকী।
হড়মড়ী মেঘের, ডেকের মকমকী॥
ঝড়ঝড়ি ঝড়ের, জলের ঝরঝরী।
চারিদিকে তরঙ্গ, জলের তরতরী॥
থরথরী থাবর, বজ্রের কড়কড়ী।
ঘুট ঘুট আঁধার, শিলায় তড়তড়ী॥
ঝড়ে উড়ে কানাৎ, দেখিয়া উড়ে প্রাণ।
কুঁড়ে ঠাট ডুবিল, তাহাতে এল বাণ॥
সাঁতারিয়া ফিরে ঘোড়া, ডুবে মরে হাতী।
পাকে গাড়া গেল গাড়ি উট তার সাথী॥

perished;—the soldiers threw away their guns, their turbans, their uniforms and with their shields abreast swam across the foaming stream. Thousands of men were drowned. Urdu-bazar with all its goods lay under water;—the carcasses of sheep, cocks and hens were all huddled together; the fruitseller with his wife took to swimming. Heaps of grass went floating by and upon one of them sat the young woman who used to sell it. She was weeping and lamenting her lot saying, "Never O Lord, was such a disaster seen. I am only 15 or 16 years of age; by divorce and death I have changed eleven husbands by this time. This present son of a slave has brought me here to die, but if I die, the matrimonial prospects of how many others will be gone!" The drummer with his drum was carried past by the flood, and the musician clasped in his arms the long gourd of his lyre (*vina*) as he floated across the stream. There was panic on all sides. The very soldiers were lamenting saying, "All is lost by this

ফেলিয়া বন্দুক জামা পাগ তলোয়ার।
ঢাল বুকে দিয়া দিল সিপাই সাঁতার॥

খাবি খেয়ে মরে লোক হাজারে হাজার।
তল গেল মাল মাত্তা উরুহু বাজার॥

বকরী বকরা মরে কুকড়ী কুকড়া।
কুজড়ানী কোলে করি ভাসিল কুজড়া॥

ঘাসের বোঝায় বসে ঘেসেড়ানী ভাসে।
ঘেসেড়া মরিল ডুবে তাহার হাভাসে॥

কাঁদি কহে ঘেসেড়ানী হায় রে গোঁসাই।
এমন বিপাকে আর কভু ঠেকি নাই॥

বৎসর পনর ষোল বয়স আমার।
ক্রমে ক্রমে বদলানু এগার ভাতার॥

হেদে গোলামের বেটা বিদেশে আনিয়া।
অনেকে অনাথ কৈল মোরে ডুবাইয়া॥

ডুবে মরে মৃদঙ্গী মৃদঙ্গ বুকে করি।
কালোয়াৎ ভাসিল বীণার লাউ ধরি॥

বাপ বাপ মরি মরি হায় হায়।
উতরায় কাঁদে লোক প্রাণ যায় যায়।

journey to Bengal. All the hard earned money, won by risking our lives, is lost. Oh woe to us! Woe to us!"

The first eight lines bring before us a vivid scene of storm and flood, by means of an array of onomatopoetic words, each of which has been chosen with singular care, the effect of the whole being such that it cannot be rendered in translation. In the remaining portion of the piece, the poet strives more for an artistic effect of language than for a realistic description of the flood. The whole thing looks like a storm painted on a scene under a mellow light. We miss the actual cries, the wringings of the heart and the death-agonies consequent on the devastating catastrophe. The descriptions of horror grow almost charming, being set as it were, to a musical air. The lines 'ডুবে মরে মৃদঙ্গী মৃদঙ্গ বুকে করি। কালোয়া ভাসিল বীণার লাউ ধরি॥' 'কাঙ্গাল হইনু সবে বাঙ্গালায় এসে' show that the poet's heart did not melt into pity at the sight of a disaster which had killed thousands of men, but that he could enliven its description by a poetic touch, and was even willing to enjoy the scene, maintaining a vein of light humour in his gay couplets.

Poetry was now reduced to an art; it delighted in niceties of sound. Bharat Chandra's poems are untranslatable. Take away the outer garb, and the picture that he draws loses all its attraction. His delicacy of colouring is perhaps peculiarly oriental. His finest things become poor in translation. The whole may be pronounced 'words, words, words' in the language of Hamlet; but, as a Bengali critic lately said, 'Bharat Chandra's poetry is the Taj of Agra made in Bengal,—not in marble but in words.'

Niceties of sound.

There are critics who would deprecate this art in literature. In a language like Bengali, which may be so easily wrought into exquisitely melodious strains, the artistic effect produced by a

কাঙ্গাল হইনু সবে বাঙ্গালায় এসে।
শিব বেচে টাকা করি সেও যায় ভেসে॥"

Bharat Chandra's Annada Mangal.

clever manipulation of sweet-sounding words, cannot be ignored. One who can raise emotions and portray pathos by metrical lines writes noble poetry no doubt, but there is a skilled labour in poetry which creates emotions not wholly definable, as do the unmeaning warblings of birds or the musical notes of a lyre. There is much poetry in mere sound—in its meaningless harmony and we must not deprecate the value of this in our mellifluous Bengali tongue.

Pranaram Chakravarty.

After Bharat Chandra, Pranaram Chakravarty wrote a Vidya-Sundara in which we come across the following lines :—

* "The first Vidya Sundara was written by Krisnaram, a native of the village Nimta;—next we find one by Rama Prasad. After these two poets, Bharat Chandra came to the field and incidentally described the story of Vidya-Sundara in his poem called the Annada Mangal." He evidently did not know the names of those earlier poets who had written on the subject before Krisnaram.

II. (a) The Court of Raja Rajavallabh in Dacca. Its poets—Jay Narayan Sen—Anandamayi Devi

Under court influence poetry became debased; though it is true that a few exquisite poetic touches might enliven scenes of sensualism. But the vocabulary of Bengali was enriched during this period by a treasure of choice expressions imported from Sanskrit. In Western Bengal Bharat Chandra, as far as the Bengali language was concerned, ruled supreme in the domain of letters. The court of Raja Krisna Chandra was the nucleus

* "বিদ্যাসুন্দরের এই প্রথম বিকাশ।
বিরচিলা কৃষ্ণরাম নিমতা যার বাস॥
তাঁহার রচিত পুঁথি আছে ঠাঁই ঠাঁই।
রামপ্রসাদের কৃত পরে দেখা পাই॥
পরেতে ভারতচন্দ্র অন্নদামঙ্গলে।
রচিলেন উপাখ্যান প্রসঙ্গের ছলে॥"

Vidya-Sundara by Pranaram.

from which flowed fashions and tastes which the aristocracy of Bengal loved to imitate. In Eastern Bengal Raja Krisna Chandra's great contemporary and rival Rajavallabh tried at his capital of Vikrampur to outdo him in all matters. Raja Rajavallabh was not as great a scholar as Krisna Chandra, but was by far the more powerful of the two, having been placed at the helm of the administration of several of the provinces of Bengal. He was, besides, immensely rich. Krisna Chandra founded a town called Sivanivas, and the temples and edifices he built there show a bold attempt to combine Saracenic with Hindu architecture. But the town of Rajanagar in Vikrampur, founded by Raja Rajavallabh, far outshone the splendour of Sivanivas. With the unlimited resources that Raja Rajavallabh commanded in Bengal, his new city was made a paradise, the like of which was not to be found in the country at that time outside Murshidabad. The famous Ekusa Ratna, with its twenty-one spires, which in the distance looked like the crest of a diadem painted on the clouds,—the Navaratna, with nine spires, and the Sapta-ratna with seven spires, displayed great architectural beauty, and the Dolmancha with its mazy staircase and lofty cupola rose to a greater height than the Ochterlony monument of Calcutta. There were, besides, palaces in which the utmost sculptural skill available at the time in India was employed. All this gave to the town a look of wealth and grandeur, which it would have been vain for Raja Krisna Chandra to attempt to approach in his new town, though Sivanivas in its own way was certainly a beautiful place. Rajanagar was unfortunately situated on the dreaded stream of the Kirttinasa—'the destroyer of fame'; this name had been earned by the river, which was a branch of the Padma, by destroying a rich town founded by Chand Ray and Kedar Ray—two chiefs of Bengal, in the 16th century. But a second time—in the middle of the 19th century the stream showed again one of its furious moods and by destroying Rajanagar caused a loss to Bengal, which for the Hindus cannot be repaired. This beautiful

Rajanagar, the capital town of Rajavallabh.

city is now in the bed of the river. It was situated six miles away from the river, when suddenly in the year 1871 A.D. there was a cataclysm. It is said that people suddenly felt the roots of grass and plants snap beneath their feet, and a crack was created, which gaping wide open like the jaws of death, made the whole plain, covered by a number of villages and the city of Rajanagar, slowly fall down into the river bed with a crash; this catastrophe took a whole year for being complete. The desolation began in August 1871 and was complete about the same time in 1872. The spires of the monuments, the Ekusaratna, the Navaratna and the Dolmancha seemed during the cataclysm to struggle for a few moments with the stream of Kirttinasa, which in its fierce play dashed against the blocks of massive stone and bricks of which the town was built, till the whole scene passed from the sight like a dream, and the waves danced over the town, disclosing not a sign of its former grandeur and pomp. Raja Rajavallabh's Rajanagar is now reduced to a dream. But the Raja had not only built a city, far outshining in its glory the town of Sivanivas, but in his court there were poets of great power who were not unworthy rivals of Bharat Chandra. In their elegance of style,—in the sweetness of choice Sanskrit expressions with which their poems are replete, Jay Narayan and his gifted niece Anandamayi showed poetical powers of a remarkable order, and it is a pity that the Harilila and Chandi by Jay Narayan in which there occur many noble lines composed by Anandamayi, could not have the circulation and the far-reaching fame which Bharat Chandra's poems attained in the more favourable soil of Western Bengal. Jay Narayan as a poet was certainly a match for Bharat Chandra, though all points considered, his poems lack the finish of his great rival's works. There are passages in the poems of the East Bengal poet which may rival the sparkling lines of Bharat Chandra; but in common details Bharat Chandra's hand moves more freely, and though the poems of both the poets have a family

The catastrophe of 1871.

The poets of the Court of Rajavallabh.

Jay Narayan compared with Bharat.

likeness in their ornate classical style, and in the depraved taste of the age, the favourite poet of Krisna Chandra is a more finished master of his art, as he is also more concise, and commands a greater facility in the use of Sanskrit metres in Bengali.

Family-history of Jay Narayan.

Jay Narayan was a cousin of Raja Rajavallabh and was a Vaidya by caste. His ancestor Gopi Raman Sen's name is mentioned by Mr. Beveridge in his history of Backerganj. Gopi Raman's second son Krisnaram obtained the titles of Dewan and Krori (millionaire) from the Nawab of Murshidabad. From an account given in the 5th of the reports of the East India Company, we see that he was employed in collecting revenue of *Pargana* Chandpratap and other places. The family residence of Krisnaram was at the village Japsa near Rajanagar. Lala Rama Prasad, his son was famous for his extensive charity. The Lala had four sons. The eldest Ramagati was famous for his high character and learning ; he wrote a well known work in Bengali called the Mayatimira-Chandrika to which we shall have occasion to refer hereafter. The youngest Jaya Narayan was one of the best poets in Bengal, and it was he who conjointly with his niece Anandamayi wrote the poem called Harilila which displays a wonderful command over the language and abounds in passages of intrinsic poetic merit. All the members of this gifted family of noble men, the ladies not excepted, were well versed in Sanskrit. Anandamayi was widely known for her learning. She at one time surprised the scholarly Brahmins assembled in the court of Raja Rajavallabh to perform the Vedic sacrifice called the Agnistoma, by offering the solution to a knotty point in connection with the sacrificial rite, with ample quotations from the Vedic texts as authority. The passages in Harilila composed by Anandamayi bear evidence of her erudition; in metre and wealth of words they closely follow classical Sanskrit and when recited they sound more like Sanskrit than Bengali. Anandamayi

Ramagati.

Jay Narayan and his niece

Anandamayi.

was married in 1761 to Ayodhyaram Sen of Payagram in the district of Khulna.

We have had already occasion to quote some passages from Jay Narayan's poems on pages 316-17. His Harilila was composed in honour of the god Satya Narayan. As usual, in the case of poems of this class, the work which is of a considerable dimension, relates a story, the sequel of which illustrates the grace of the god towards his followers in the shape of gifts of earthly fortune. I quote another passage from Harilila below :—

From Harilila.

* "The night passed in this way. The eastern horizon was painted with the purple colours of the dawn. The stars gradually disappeared from the sky. The birds left their nests and flew in all directions. The raven was crowing from the tree and did not as yet alight on the ground. Chandrabhana (the hero) held the hands of Sunetra (the heroine). 'Permit me to go,' he said again and again to her. At the dawn of the day which was auspicious for the journey he left her, and her tearful eyes followed the course he took. She stood and looked wistfully as far as her eyes could see him. The moon, with false promises, left the beautiful *Kumuda* flower that had been so gay and happy during

The parting.

* "ঘোরতর রজনী অতীত এই মতে।
পূর্ব্বদিক রক্ত দিনকর-কিরণেতে॥
আকাশে নক্ষত্রগণ ভাঙ্গি যায় বেলা।
পাখিগণ ইতি উতি নিজ বাস ছাড়ে।
বিরলে ডাকিছে কাক ভূমে নাহি পড়ে॥
চন্দ্রভাণ করযুগ ধরি সুনেত্রার।
'যাই' বলি বিদায় যাগিছে বার বার॥
উষাকালে যাত্রা করি যায় চন্দ্রভাণ।
সজল নয়নে ধনি পাছেতে পয়ান॥
যতদূর চলে আঁখি চাহে দাঁড়াইয়া।
সুধাকর যায় ইন্দীবর ভাঁড়াইয়া॥

the night. The flower turned pale at the approach of the sun."

Anandamayi, as I said, is fond of displaying her erudition. In her compositions she generally adopts Sanskrit metres, the pompous sweep of which she well retains in Bengali. A passage is given below to illustrate her learned style which thinly veils under grandiloquent language, the immodest taste that characterised her age.

A marriage scene by Anandamayi.

*" Look at the bevy of women assembled in myriads to the front and rear, peeping through the windows and confronting you at every point. The beauties assembled there were running about at play, fantastically tripping and breaking into charming laughter. Even the sedate matrons of the group were overpowered by the beauty of the bridegroom. Look at the array of sweet and charming faces of aquiline noses and of flowing tresses, and behold how beautiously bedecked they stand! With what fascination they speak and smile! Behold the slenderness and coquettish manner of the worthy belle. Look at her graceful flirtations, which show how well she is versed in the ways of Cupid, and in the art of captivating her admirers. Looking at Chandrabhana, they found themselves lost in bewilderment and

নিশি ভরি কুমুদিনী কৌতুকে আছিল।
রবি অবলোকনে মুখ মলিন হইল॥"

Harilila by Jay Narayan.

* "হের চৌদিকে কামিনী লক্ষে লক্ষে।
সমক্ষে, পরক্ষে, গবাক্ষে কটাক্ষে॥
অতি প্রৌঢ়াস্তপা স্তরূপে মজন্তি।
হসন্তি, স্খলন্তি, দ্রবন্তি, পতন্তি॥
কত চারুবক্ত্রা, সুবেশা, সুকেশা।
সুনাসা, সুহাসা, সুবাসা, সুভাষা॥
কত ক্ষীণমধ্যা, সুভঙ্গা, সুযোগ্যা।
রতিজ্ঞা, বশীজ্ঞা, মনোজ্ঞা, মদজ্ঞা॥
দেখি চন্দ্রভাণে কত চিত্তহারা।
নিকারা, বিকারা, বিহারা, বিভোরা॥

in an all-absorbing delirious excitement. The impassioned matron, the gay spinster, the wedded wife and the coy maiden, all stirred about in excitement and glee. Their dazzling earrings contused the lovely neck of many a merry woman. But they all moved about in gaiety. Some bore on their lips the marks of their lover's kiss. How many a golden beauty was secretly pierced to the heart by the flowery arrows of Cupid! Many had come with dishevelled hair, many overcast with pallor; and many faint and slender. The tresses of many were in disorder and many had the *sari* girt about the waist. The necklaces of others were loose and slipping off. The ornaments on their persons were falling and so was their wearing apparel. Many of them, smitten with the ardour of Cupid, broke into enchanting strains; and some put their arms on the shoulders of their companions and indolently stood addressing sweet and pleasing words to others. Some poured water on Sunetra and others on Chandrabhana but all did so with great care, and they all poured water with their own delicate little hands, and as it fell on their persons, gurgling from the pitchers it kept time with the tingling music of their ornaments. The girl-friends of the bride

করে দৌড়িদোড়া মদমত্তা প্রৌঢ়া।
অনূঢ়া, বিমূঢ়া, নবোঢ়া, নিগুঢ়া॥
কোন কামিনী কুণ্ডলে গণ্ড-ঘৃষ্টা।
প্রহৃষ্টা, সচেষ্টা, কেহ গুঢ়দষ্টা॥
অনঙ্গাস্ত্রভিন্না কত স্বর্ণবর্ণা।
বিকীর্ণা, বিশীর্ণা, বিদীর্ণা, বিবর্ণা॥
কারো ব্যস্ত বেণী নাহি বাস বক্ষে।
কারো হার কুর্পাস বিস্রস্ত কক্ষে॥
গলদ্ঘর্ম্মা কেহ নাহি বাস অঙ্গে।
গলদ্রাগিণী কেউ মাতিয়া অনঙ্গে॥
কারো বাহুবল্লী কারো স্কন্ধ দেশে।
রহিয়া সাধুবাক্য বক্তে প্রকাশে॥
সুনেত্রাকে কহে, কেহ চন্দ্রভাগে।
করে সেক তোরে সবে সাবধানে॥
সুহস্তে ঢালিছে সর্ব্ব বারি অঙ্গে।
ঝনৎ ঝনৎ গলৎ গলৎ পড়ে নীর অঙ্গে॥

addressing Chandrabhana said in jest (alluding to the match), 'A diamond necklace dangles from the neck of a crow.' The bride and the bridegroom heard the jest, and hung down their heads in modesty, and the women burst into loud laughter."

(b) *The poets of the school of Bharat Chandra*

A host of poets who imitated the style of Bharat Chandra and who wrote in the latter part of the 18th century contributed works which have been suppressed by the Indian Penal Code. Stray copies of such works that came into our hands 25 years ago, are no longer available. But early in the 19th century, the stories of Chandrakanta, of Nayantara and Kamini Kumar enjoyed great popularity with certain sections of our community. The authors of these poems were not great scholars like Bharat Chandra, Jaya Narayan or Anandamayi, but they carried the depraved and indecent taste of the new school a step further. The moral atmosphere of young men living in towns was contaminated by their influence. Lord Byron's gallant character, Don Juan, entered the harem of a Muslim monarch, disguised as a female servant and so palmed himself off upon its occupants. Chandrakanta, the young merchant, in the poem of the same name is described as having done similar freaks in the inner apartments of a Raja. The influence of Persian literature is stamped on many of these works ; but the Bengali language in these poems, it must be admitted, made further progress towards elegance. High-sounding Sanskritic words were gradually dropped in favour of small and sweet colloquial words of classical origin

Chandrakanta and Kamini Kumar: their bad taste.

সখী চন্দ্রভাণে বলে চাতুরীতে।
এ রত্নের মালা কাকের গলাতে॥
শুনি চাতুরী দম্পতী হেট মাথে।
ঢলাঢল্ গলাগল্ সখী সব তাতে॥"

A marriage-scene by Anandamayi from Harilila.

and the metres run in a genial flow in these. I quote the following passage from Kamini Kumar by Kali Krisna Das.

"'' The reign of Autumn came to an end, and Spring, the prince of seasons, came to rule with his mighty host. The southern breeze, the royal messenger, proclaimed his approach to the world. The flowers, who constituted the army of the prince, dressed themselves beautifully to give them a reception. The *ketaki* with saw in hand stood proudly smiling. The *champaka* held a spear, and hastened to the spot. The *baka* tree wore the crooked bow of its flowers like the crescent moon. The rose and the jessamine, two gallant warriors, approached in full bloom to join the fight The *gandharaja* wore white apparel and the *java* with red spikes stood ready. The *palasa* held a bow and the *rangana* looked like the arrow of that bow. The lotus floating in the pond looked like the shield of Cupid. When this gay army had made itself

The advent of spring.

* "হিমান্ত হইলে পরে বসন্ত রাজন।
দলবল লইয়া আইল করিতে শাসন॥
প্রথমে সংবাদ দিতে পাঠাইলা দূত।
আজ্ঞামাত্র চলিলেক মলয়া মারুত॥
বায়ু মুখে শুনি বসন্তের আগমন।
সুসজ্জা করিল যত পুষ্প সেনাগণ॥
কেতকী করাত করে করিয়া ধারণ।
দম্ভে দাঁড়াইল হইয়া প্রফুল্ল বদন॥
শূল হস্তে করি শীঘ্র সাজিল চম্পক।
অর্দ্ধচন্দ্র বাণ ধরি ধাইলেক বক॥
গোলাব সেউতি পুষ্প সেনার প্রধান।
প্রফুটিত হইয়া দোঁহে হইল আগুয়ান॥
গন্ধরাজ ধাইলেক পরি শ্বেত বস্ত্র।
ওড় জবা ধাইলেক ধরি তীক্ষ্ণ অস্ত্র॥
মল্লিকা মালতী জাতী কামিনী বকুল।
কুন্দ আদি সাজে তারা যুদ্ধেতে অতুল॥
পলাশ ধনুক হস্তে করিয়া দাঁড়ায়।
রঞ্জন তাহার বাণ হেন অভিপ্রায়॥
সরোজহ ঢাল হয়ে ভাসিল জীবনে।
এইরূপে সজ্জা কৈল পুষ্প সেনাগণে॥

ready to receive the prince, the god of love led them as their general. He aimed his five arrows at those who lived in separation from the beloved. He ordered the cuckoo and the zephyr to spy on all who were slow in giving response to this call of love. The royal command was communicated to all. The prince wanted tribute. The cuckoo was ordered to kill the defaulters by his sweet strain. The birds seated on the bough of a tree with their melodious cooings intimated the royal command."

This idea is followed up till one has almost reached the bottomless pit of indecent realism.

Giridhar's translation of the Gita Govinda.

That stamp of ornateness for which this age in literature is famous is very marked in the translation of the Gita Govinda by Giridhar who finished the poem in 1736 A.D.,—sixteen years before Bharat Chandra had completed his Annada Mangal. It is his finished Sanskritic style that marks his affinity with the poets of the school of Bharat Chandra This translation threw into the shade the earlier attempt by Rasamay Das who had translated the Gita Govinda in the metre called *payar chhanda* so commonly adopted by the early Bengali poets. Giridhar's poem reproduces in Bengali as far as possible the spirit of the original in

মলয়ার মুখে শুনি রাজ আগমন।
অগ্রগণ্য সেনাপতি সাজিল মদন॥
শরাসনে সন্ধান করিয়া পঞ্চশর।
বিরহী নাশিতে বীর চলিল সত্বর॥
কোকিল ভ্রমরে ডাকি কহিল মদন।
দেখ রাজ্যে বিরহিণী আছে কোন জন॥
প্রতি ঘরে ঘরে গিয়া দেহ সমাচার।
শীঘ্রগতি কর দিতে বসন্ত রাজার॥
বিশেষ রাজার আজ্ঞা কর অবধান।
যে না দেয় কর, তার বধহ পরাণ॥
আজ্ঞা পেয়ে দুই সেনা করিল গমন।
রমণী মণ্ডলে আসি দিল দরশন॥
প্রথমে কোকিল গিয়া বসি বৃক্ষপরে।
রাজ আজ্ঞা জানাইল নিজ কুহুস্বরে॥"

Kamini Kumar by Kali Krisna Das.

all the gay metres which we find in the Sanskrit poem, nay, he imports with an easy grace the very words of Sanskrit which admirably suit his classical Bengali. I give two passages in the foot-note which retain wonderfully the music and sweep of the stanzas of the great lyrical master of Sanskrit.*

III. Poetry of rural Bengal

The villages of Bengal.

Let us pass from the city to the village. The villages of Bengal, half a century ago, were the abodes of peace, of love and of devotion. The vices of the towns stamped the literature of the courts degrading it to wicked sensualism; the vain pedantry of scholars introduced into it erudite absurdities of far-fetched imagery; non-Hindu ideas found favour with the citizens, directly under the influence of an alien civilisation. But the quiet Hindu was not in his element in the city. His true home lay in the village;

* (1) "এ সখি সুন্দরী যুবতী জনে হরি, নাচত কত প্রকার।
পবনে লবঙ্গলতা, মৃদু বিচলিত, শীতল গন্ধ বহায়,
কুহু কুহু করি, কোকিলকুল কুজিত, কুঞ্জে ভ্রমরীগণ গায়॥
বকুল ফুলে, মধু পিয়ে মধুকরগণ, তাহে লম্বিত তরু ডাল।
পতি দূরে যার, তার প্রতি মনোরথ, মননথনে হয় কাল॥
মৃগমদ গন্ধে, তমাল পল্লব, ব্যাপিত হইল সুবাস।
যুবজন-হৃদয় বিদারিতে, কামের নখ কিবা হইল পলাশ॥
মদন নৃপের ছত্র হেম নির্ম্মিত কি নাগেশ্বর ফুল।
শিলিমুখ সদৃশ বাণ নিরমাওল, পাটলী ফুল অতুল॥
দেখি বিলক্ষণ, জগত ফুল ছল, তরুণ করুণ কিয়ে হাসে।
কেতকী কর সদৃশ করি নিরমিল, বিরহী বিদারণ আশে॥"

(2) "যমুনাতীরে, মন্দ বহে মারুত, তাহাতে বসিয়া যুবরাজ।
কর অভিসার, করি রতিরস, মদন মনোহর বেশে।
গমনে বিলম্বনা কর নিতম্বিনী, চল চল প্রাণনাথ পাশে॥
তুয়া নিজ নাম, শ্যাম করি সঙ্কেত, বাজায় মুরলী মৃদুভাবে।
তুয়া তনু পরশি, ধূলিরেণু উড়ত, তাহে পুনঃ পুনঃ প্রশংসে॥
উড়াইতে পক্ষী, বৃক্ষদল বিচলিতে, তুয়া আগমন হেন মানে।
দ্রুতগতি শেষ করতঃ, পুনঃ চমকই, নিরখত তুয়া পথ পানে॥
শবদ অধীর, নূপুর কর দূরে, রিপুর সদৃশ রতিরঙ্গে।
অতিতমপুঞ্জ, কুঞ্জবনে সখী চল, নীল উড়ানি নে অঙ্গে॥"

there, under the canopy of the blue sky, on which the gay seasons of our tropical clime present in succession their ever-shifting array of scenes, the Hindu had found leisure for centuries to ponder over the deeper problems of life; undisturbed he devoted himself to interpreting the texts of the *sastras* like some Epicurean god sitting over his nectar—careless of mankind. Political squabbles rent the life of cities; kings were dethroned, and new flags were unfurled in ancient capitals; but a change of government did not affect the conditions of life of a Hindu village.

Long distance separates these villages of Bengal from the seething life of political centres. These homes of the people are counted sacred by reason of the noble rivers on whose banks they stand,—the rushing Ganges, the ever-white Dhaleswari, the foaming Padma, tha furious Damodar, the great Brahmaputra, the dark-watered Meghna, and many others that branch themselves into a hundred streams to flow to the sea, keeping up a never-ceasing music by their murmurs. How do these villages adorn themselves with gardens, through whose green foliage peep the scarlet *java*, the white *kunda*, and the crescent-shaped yellow *atasi*,—gardens where the sacred *bel* and *nimba* trees rustle in the breeze the long summer day! There from thick groves of mango and jack, starts suddenly spire-like to view, the tall Bengali *devadaru* rising above the majestic *asvattha*—far beyond tiara-shaped domes of temples. Here, under the sacred *tulasi* plant, the lamp is lighted at even-fall and the brow marked with vermilion bows down to leave its scarlet traces at the root. Here the sound of the evening conch summons the villagers to the temple; while on the edge of the meadow the cows stand quietly waiting the call of the shepherds to lead them to the shed; and the *madhavi* creepers, rich with the treasure of the spring, diffuse their fragrance as the weary pilgrim approaches his earthly pradise, his straw-roofed mud-hovel. From these same simple Bengali homes sprang the Navya Nyaya—the logical system of modern Bengal—which some of us hold to be the greatest achievement of the pure intellect in modern times. In these

villages the poems of Valmiki and Vyasa, of Kalidas and Bhavabhuti have, for hundreds of years, cast the spell of their beauty upon the people. In them the lofty principles of Vedanta Philosophy have been taught by Brahmins who realised that man was one with the universe,—a flute through which might sound the whole music of God's kingdom,—and that his greatest good lay in returning to the consciousness of his oneness with the Supreme Principle. These Bengali villages are hallowed above all by the wonderful sacrifices of the *satis*, and their heroic death on the funeral pyres of their husbands, when, with a gentle wave of the hand from the midst of flames, they would often indicate a wish to hear the name of god recited at the last moment. Here in Bengal the renunciation of Buddha has been practised by princes from age to age, by Dipankara Sri Jnana of Eastern Bengal—by Gopi Chand of the Pal dynasty, by Narottam of Kheturi, by Raghunath Das of Satgaon, and in our modern times by the saintly Lala Babu of Paikpara, all of whom left their worldly glory, and went forth, beggar's bowl in hand, caring for naught but the highest truth vouchsafed to man. Here the dynasty of the ancient *risis* and seers of the Vedanta Philosophy remains unbroken to the present day in the person of Ram Krisna Paramhansa, who exemplified self-forgetful divine love in the eyes of men now living. The villages of Bengal should not be taken for the homes of men like Mirzafar and Umichand —political intriguers, trained in courts to heinous vices, revolting to the nature of a rural people. Fifty years ago the one great fear of Hindu parents in Bengal was lest their sons should take the vow of the *Sannyasin*. They would not allow them even to sit on a *kusasana*,—a seat which was generally used by *Sadhus*. Since the time of Buddha, renunciation in the cause of the highest truth has been no idle dream, no will-o'-the-wisp theory amongst Hindus. It is a goal towards which the whole Indian civilisation has continued to move, even as Western civilisation moves towards patriotism, and against political serfdom.

Renunciation, the goal of Hindu life.

The homes of Bengal have even been seed-beds of high thought. The control of the passions, the mastery over self, the training of the mind to concentration and *yoga*—till it can reach the state of final beatitude—are aims which have engrossed the energy of our people; and Hindus have never been afraid of privation, pain or sacrifice to reach this goal. They have sought a revelation of God within the soul,—the highest aim that can attract a mortal. A certain mystery enshrouds those who scale the greatest heights; but the Yoga Philosophy is a system which enables a man to arrive at a definite realisation, and those who would cry it down must first study the vast literature which has gathered round the subject, and understand what is really meant.

The home-life of Bengal has been best expressed in its songs. In these, one may find out all he wants to know about the Bengali people. They are as thoroughly Indian as the *kunda* flowers of the soil and many of them spring from sincere souls as tributes to god, even as *kunda* flowers are offered by Brahmin to Visnu. From the highest truths of Yoga down to the pettiest concerns of daily life, every point that touches our aims, our idea and our manner of life is embodied in these songs. Many of them have been composed by saints like Rama Prasad and Fakir Chand, which no one who is not an adept in Yoga, can well understand. Those on *Dehatattva*, or the spiritual principles governing the human body, are too abstract for laymen. Their language is not difficult, but they offer points of perplexity because they illustrate an experience of which we know too little.

The Songs.

Bengali songs may be grouped in four main classes:—A. The *kirtana* songs to which we have already alluded; B. The songs of the *kaviwallas*; C. Religious songs; D. The songs of the *Yatras* or the popular drama.

Grouped in four classes.

(B)—*Kaviwallas and their Songs*

Let us begin with the second of these groups, *viz.*, the songs of the *kaviwallas*. The *kaviwallas* were parties of minstrels who

sang songs mainly descriptive of incidents in the life of Krisna. Their party consisted of men and women who stood and sang in chorus. They were for this reason called Danda-kavis or the standing ministrels. Their leader generally composed songs relating to the love of Radha and Krisna or the domestic scenes in Kailas—the abode of Siva and his consort Uma. Latterly a good deal of competition arose amongst different *kaviwallas*. Sambhu Chandra, a son of Raja Krisna Chandra of Navadvipa, about the time of the battle of Plassey, began to organise professional bands of *kaviwallas*, and a new element was introdueed into their songs. The chief singer of one party, as a sequel to his own songs, would begin to compose *extempore* verses attacking the leader of the opposite party who would next occupy the stage. The latter would not be slow to make a retort at the end of his songs and the seething satire and gross vulgarity which came to characterise these fights of the *kaviwallas* evoked a most animated interest from city audience. But this corrupting influence was, comparatively speaking, absent from the performances of village *kaviwallas*.

Danda-kavis.

Attacks on rival parties.

The *kavi* songs had originally constituted parts of old *yatras* or popular plays. The simple episodes in the *yatras*, especially those of the nature of light opera, were in course of time wrought into a separate class of songs, which were sung by these distinct bodies of professional bards called *kaviwallas*, whose domain was thus completely severed from that of the *yatra* parties. The *kaviwallas* used the musical instrument called the *madala* to mark time in their songs. The notes of the *madala* were lighter than those of the grave *khol* which was used by *yatras* and *kirtana*-parties.

The origin of the *kavi* songs.

The earliest *kaviwalla*, about whom information has been obtained, was Raghu, a cobbler who flourished in the 17th century. The low caste of this singer shows that the institution was based upon the amusement of the rustics. Gradually the higher classes came to take an

Raghu, the cobbler.

interest in it. But the chief audience of the *kaviwallas* have always consisted mainly of illiterate rural people. Alas, these songs are heard no more in Bengal! The death-knell of this institution, once so popular, was sounded by the new Bengali drama influenced by European models; and though the *yatras* still exist, they are only like ghosts of their former selves. We miss the national tone in them. Our *Yatra-wallas* now mimic the modern theatres. They cannot afford the costs of making a stage or purchasing scenery, hence they generally hold their performances in temporary sheds, raised for the occasion, or oftentimes under the open sky. They have abandoned the ground that once belonged to them, and from which they once wielded so great a moral and spiritual force, and any one who can recollect the old *yatras* and has the misfortune to attend their modern caricatures, is involuntarily reminded of Hamlet's famous line, "Look here upon this picture, and on that!"

The degeneracy of the old *yatra*.

The songs of the *kaviwallas* in former times gave pictures of the domestic life of Bengal with all its gentle lights and shadows. The coy Bengali wife, unable to speak out those sentiments of love with which her heart is filled, is beautifully portrayed in them. I quote below a song by Rama Vasu, a *kaviwalla*, who once enjoyed great popularity in the country. The song opens the door to a chamber into which outsiders have no access;—where the coy wife whispers her tale of grief to her maid and *confidanté*. It is no free speech of love; we may well imagine the sobs, the sighs and tear with which she delivers her tale, in a voice scarcely audible. Unfortunately, it is impossible to convey the wailing cadence of the tune of the song. The bashful woman is longing for a sight of her husband, yet she could not speak out at the moment of farewell. Here is a picture of the Hindu wife that we miss in those poems and novels of modern Bengal which have been influenced by English literature.

The bashful Hindu wife.

Rama Vasu.

"'I could not tell him what I felt. My heart was filled with sorrow. But it was hidden so deep! I tried to speak, when he said good-bye, but shyness overwhelmed me and I said nothing. You see I am a woman, so how could I beg him not to leave me? Oh! why was I made a woman? May I not be so again!

"In the dawn of my youth and in the bloom of the spring he has left me! When he smiled and said, 'I am going,' I wept to see him smile,—smile at the hour of parting! My heart yearned after him; I left a longing to clasp him and detain him, but shyness came upon me, and seemed to say—'But how can you touch?' I saw his face beaming with smiles. I covered my own to hide my flowing tears. How cruel he was—he seemed to feel no pain at saying farewell! Oh! he has left me, left me without a sigh."

A high spiritual tone.

Often a high spiritual tone pervades the *kavi* songs. The love of Radha and Krisna is the theme which has for ages inspired the Bengali imagination with the highest emotions. Rasu Narasinha who lived in the middle of the 16th century sang the following and similar other songs. They indicate the high spiritual plane from which the poet gave an interpretation of love.

Rasu Narasinha.

"মনে রইল সই মনের বেদনা।
প্রবাসে যখন যায় গো সে, তারে বলি বলি আর বলা হ'ল না।
সরমে মরমের কথা কওয়া গেল না॥
যদি নারী হয়ে সাধিতাম তাকে।
রমণী বলে হাসিত লোকে॥
সখি ধিক্ থাক্ আমারে, ধিক্ সে বিধাতারে,
নারী জনম যেন আর করে না॥
একে আমার যৌবন কাল, তাহে কাল বসন্ত এল,
এ সময়ে প্রাণনাথ প্রবাসে গেল॥
যখন হাসি হাসি সে 'আসি' বলে।
সে হাসি দেখে ভাসি নয়ন জলে॥
তারে পারি কি ছেড়ে দিতে, মন চায় ধরিতে,
লজ্জা বলে ছি ছি ছুঁয়ো না।
তার মুখ দেখে, মুখ ঢেকে কাঁদিলাম সজনী,
অনায়াসে প্রবাসে গেল সে গুণমণি॥"

* "Speak to me, O my friend, of love. I am sick at heart and weary of the world. I yearn for love. O speak of love divine which heals a weary heart and opens the eyes to truth. Where may it be had? O tell me this! I yearn to visit its sacred shrine.

"I have heard from those who know, that you are an adept in the secrets of this love. Be thou sincere and soothe my wounded heart by telling me of it. Weary of life, I have come to you for this.

"Where is the fountain of that great love, for which Prahlada, the son of Hiranyakasipu, left the world, and courted hardships in the forest—for which the god Siva spends day and night in *Yoga* in holy contemplation? Where is the fountain of that love which made Prince Bhagiratha bring down the stream of the Ganges from the celestial regions for the good of the world? What is that love which created the heart-rending woe of the maids of the Vrinda groves when Krisna left them for Mathura, and by dint of which the *Madhavi* creepers on the banks of the Jumna had the good fortune to touch his lotus feet?"

Here is another song by Rasu Narasinha which sounds very like a sermon.

† "This earthly love, O maids, is no love. Of her who yields to earthly love, suffering is the destiny.

* "কহ সখি কিছু প্রেমেরই কথা, ঘুচাও আমার মনের ব্যথা;
করিলে শ্রবণ, হয় দিব্যজ্ঞান, হেন প্রেমধন উপজে কোথা॥
আমি এসেছি বিরাগে, মনেরি রাগে, পিরীতি প্রয়াগে মুড়াব মাথা।
আমি রসিকের স্থানে, পেয়েছি সন্ধানে, তুমি নাকি জান প্রেম-বারতা॥
কাপটা ত্যজিয়া, কহ বিবরিয়া, ইহার লাগিয়া এসেছি হেথা।
হায় কোন প্রেম লাগি, প্রহ্লাদ বৈরাগী, মহাদেব যোগী কেমন প্রেমে।
কি প্রেম কারণে, ভগীরথ জনে, ভাগীরথী আনে ভারতভূমে॥
কোন প্রেমে হরি, ব'ধে ব্রজনারী, গেল মধুপুরী করে অনাথা।
কোন প্রেম-ফলে, কালিন্দীর কুলে কৃষ্ণপদ পেলে মাধবীলতা॥"

† "সখি এ সকল প্রেম প্রেম নয়।
ইহাতে মজিয়ে নাহি সুখের উদয়॥

"Forsaken by friends, slandered by the world, she is subjected to shame. Would you love, O maidens? Love so that both here in this world and in the next you may have nothing but happiness! Love Krisna the healer of all sore hearts. Why drink ye poison, leaving nectar! Why expose yourselves to slander, which is worse than death?

"In the temple of your heart place him from whom flows the fountain of all happiness. Close your eyes and call him dearest and offer your soul unto his feet. Then partings cannot come to cause you woe, nor the slanderous tongue pursue you.

"Let your mind be the bird *chakora*, and cry for a drop of mercy, even as the bird cries for a drop of water from the clouds. From the divine feet bearing the marks of ধ্বজ (the flag), বজ্র (the thunder), and অঙ্কুশ (the hook) flowed the Ganges, and what is that but the stream of His mercy? Bathe yourself in this, the sacred stream of divine mercy. You will be immortalised in love.

"Take refuge in the feet from which springs all light; they will dispel the darkness of the mind; that light will cause your heart to bloom, even as the sun's rays open up the lotus. Be deep-drunk like the bee with the honey of his love.

সুহৃদ ভঞ্জন, লোক গঞ্জন, কলঙ্কভাজন হতে হয়।
এমন পিরিতি করি, যাতে তরি, দুদিকে, ঐহিকে আর পারত্রিকে।
শ্রীনন্দ নন্দন, দুঃখ ভঞ্জন, সদা রাখি মন তার পায়॥
অমিয় ত্যজে, গরলে মজে, উপজে কি সুখ।
কলঙ্ক ঘোষণ, জগতে মরণ হ'তে অধিক॥
হৃদয় মন্দির মাঝে, রসরাজে, বসায়ে দেখিব আঁখি মুদিয়ে।
বিকায়ে সে পদে, বাঁধি হৃদে, কলঙ্ক বিচ্ছেদে নাহি ভয়ে॥
মনেরে করে চাতক পাখী রাখ্‌ব বিশেষে।
জল দেহি জল দেহি ডাক্‌ব প্রেমের প্রয়াসে॥
ধ্বজ বজ্রাঙ্কুশ যুত পদ হইতে, জাহ্নবী হলেন যাহাতে।
সে কৃপাজলে মন ডুবায়ে, করিব কালেরে পরাজয়॥
কমলরঞ্জন, সেবিতবন, অরুণচরণে।
মনের তিমির বিনাশ পায় সে কিরণে॥
হৃদে আছে শতদল, সে কমল ফুটিবে, প্রেম পিযুষ ঘটিবে।
মন মধুব্রত হয়ে যেন, রত সেই নামামৃত সুধা খায়।

"The creator has placed nectar and poison in the same cup and given you eyes to discriminate between the two. Why should ye prefer poison to nectar like a blind man? He who acts like a blind man though he has eyes, misuses and loses carelessly the precious gift of love."

The motherhood.

In the songs of Menaka and Yasoda we find true portraits of the tender ness of Bengali mothers. In those days there was scarcely a Bengali mother who did not pass sleepless nights of longing for some girl-child of eight, sent to a stranger-family to play the housewife under a veil. These little wives were not allowed to move about or talk except in whispers to others of her own age! We all know the silent agonies of the mother's soul for her little widowed daughter living on a single meal a day, and observing fasts and vigils! This throbbing motherhood with its anxious eyes and fervent faith is called up to the mind's eyes as we hear these old songs of the village bards. We find in them the deep spirituality which has always made Bengali women bear the ills of life in a contented spirit; we see besides, their devotion to their husbands and notice their skill in the culinary art and their hospitality in these songs. Above all, we have a glimpse of their deep piety proving them to be the true daughters of those who showed such marvellous fortitude and faith as *satis* on the funeral pyres of their husbands. These songs represent the feelings of the village people of Bengal, full of tender domestic instincts, who have lived plain lives, but have aspired to scale the loftiest heights in religion.

A list of *kaviwallas*.

We give a list of *kaviwallas* below :—

1. Raghu the cobbler was a resident of Salkia—a village on the western bank of the Ganges facing Calcutta. He lived in the middle of the 16th century.

অমিয়-আর গরল দুই রাখিয়ে সাক্ষাতে।
নয়ন দিছেন বিধাতা দেখিয়ে ভক্ষিতে॥
ত্যজিয়ে এ সুধারস, কেন বিষ ভক্ষিবে, কলুষকূপে ডুবিবে।
থাকিতে নয়ন অন্ধ যে জন, পেয়ে প্রেমধন সে হারায়॥"

* 2. Rasu Narasinha resident of Gondalpara near Chandernagar,
3. Gozla Gui.
4. Lalu Nandalal.

5. Haru Thakur (Hare Krisna Dirghangi) born in 1738 at Simla in Calcutta. One of his songs runs thus :—

Song by Haru Thakur

† " The dark night is still. Its silence is broken from time to time by thunderous clouds. The bird *chatak* and the peacock are happy to hear the sound. Tell me, O my maids, where is my Krisna now? The fragrance of the *kadamba*, the *ketaki*, the *jati*, the *champaka* and the *seuti* flowers fills the air. They remind me of Krisna, who is not with me. The fire-flies dance and the lightning flashes, and the scene is suddenly lit up as if by day-light. The bird *sari* sits quietly with her mate and they touch each other with their bills in love. Where is my Krisna, O my maids, at this hour ?"

In another song he says :—

‡ " Do not be slow to recite the name of Krisna, come what may. Would you give up hope, my soul, because suffering has been your lot in this world ? Would you sink your boat in the water because there are waves in it ? "

Haru Thakur died in 1813. Though he used to compose songs for professional parties, he himself was an amateur, and

* The three bards whose names are bracketed were contemporaries of Raghu.

† "সখীর ধারে বহিছে এই ঘোরতরা রজনী ॥
এ সময়ে প্রাণ সখীরে, কোথায় গুণমণি ; ঘন গরজে ঘন শুনি ॥
ঐ ময়ূর ময়ূরী হরষিত, হেরি চাতক চাতকিনী ॥
ঐ কদম্ব কেতকী চম্পক জাতি সেউতি সেফালিকে ।
প্রাণেতে প্রাণেতে মোহ জন্মায় প্রাণনাথে গৃহে না দেখে ॥
বিদ্যুত খদ্যোত দিবা জ্যোতির্ময় প্রকাশে দিনমণি ।
প্রিয়মুখে মুখ দিয়ে সারিশুক থাকে দিবস রজনী ॥"

‡ "হরি নাম লইতে অলস হইও না, রসনা, যা' হবার তা' হবে ।
ঐহিকেরই সুখ হল না বলে, কি ঢেউ দেখি তরী ডুবাবে ॥"

cared not to earn money by the profession of a *kaviwalla*. At one time Raja Nava Kissen of Grey Street, Calcutta, was so pleased with his songs that he offered a valuable *shawl* as a present to him, but he indignantly made a gift of it to a low caste drummer of the party.

Rama Vasu and others.

6. Rama Vasu born at Salkia in 1786, died in 1828. We have already quoted one of his songs on page 587 describing the pathos of love and especially scenes of parting.

7. Nityananda Bairagi resident of Chandernagar, born in 1751 and died in 1821.
8. Nilu.
9. Rama Prasad.
10. Uday Das.
11. Paran Das.
12. Bhavani Benia.
13. Mohan Sarkar.
14. Thakur Sinha.
15. Nilu Hari Patni.
16. Kasi Nath Patni.
17. Bhola Moira.
18. Chinta Moira.
19. Balaram Kapali.
20. Govinda Arajavegi.
21. Krisna Muchi.
22. Uddhava Das.
23. Paran Sinha.
24. Ramrup Thakur of Dacca.
25. Jajneswari, a woman.
26. Goraksa Nath.
27. Gaur Kaviraj.
28. Satu Ray.
29. Gadadhar Mukerjee.
30. Jay Narayan Mukerjee.
31. Thakur Das Chakravarty.

32. Nabai Thakur.

33. Kasi Chandra Guha.

The names included in this list from No. 15 onward refer to contemporary *kaviwallas* or to those who were nearly contemporary to one another. They flourished in the earlier half of the 19th century. It should be said here, that though many of the *kaviwallas* lived when English rule had been established in India, their school was not at all influenced by English ideas.

Not influenced by English Ideas.

We have not named in this list one *kaviwalla* who enjoyed great popularity in Calcutta and its suburbs early in the 19th century. This was Mr. Antony of Chandernagore. He and his brother Mr. Kelly were of Portuguege parentage, and had settled in Bengal. They had accumulated immense wealth by successful trade in India. Antony, when a young man, fell in love with a remarkably handsome Brahmin widow of Chandernagore. He did not marry her, but the pair lived as husband and wife in his garden house at Gereti near Chandernagore, where the remains of his house may still be seen. Antony did not interfere with the religious views of the Brahmin woman, nay he encouraged them as best as he could, for in his house at Gereti, the religious festivals of the Hindus were performed by her with great *eclat*, and he heartily joined the festal ceremonies. The temple of Kali known as Firingi Kali, at 243, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta, was erected by him at her desire.

The Portuguese *Kaviwalla*—Mr. Antony.

Antony acquired Bengali so well that he gained a perfect mastery over its colloquial forms. During the religious festivals of Hindus, his house became a resort of the *kaviwallas* who showed their enthusiasm in reviling their rivals in *extempore* verses. Antony took so great an interest in these free competitions of the *kaviwallas*, that he himself founded a party of his own, and employed a bard named Goraksa Nath to compose *extempore* verses of satire to be levelled against others. He however, soon found that he was himself more than a match for

many a *kaviwalla*, dismissed Goraksa Nath, and himself appeared on the stage singing Bengali songs; and as a sequel to them he attacked the rival parties in doggerels composed *extempore* by himself—vilifying, slandering and abusing them to the height of his power. It was a curious sight to see a European leave his trousers, coat and hat, dress himself with a *chadar* hanging down from his shoulders, and the *kocha* of his *dhooti* neatly flowing, in strict Bengali fashion, and singing songs in praise of the goddess Kali as follows :—

*"I am a Portuguese and don't know how to worship thee, Oh Kali, be merciful to me."

This he did for the sake of amusement; for he remained a Christian all his life, though by living with his Hindu consort and in the atmosphere of Hindu ideas he had acquired the liberal views of the Hindus on matters of religion and was quite devoid of crude bigotry. Antony's party soon acquired the fame of being invincible in their extempore satirical verses. Thakur Sinha the leader of another party of *kaviwallas* made a charge at him in the following couplet :—

† "Tell me, O Antony, for I want to know, why you have, coming to this land of ours, turned a vagabond without a coat?"

Mr. Antony was in the midst of audience consisting of common folk who would not appreciate any humour or clever stroke of wit. He was not only required to be coarse in his abuse, but to couch it in Bengali idioms of these rustic folk, and it must be admitted that he was fully equal to the task. Here is the extempore doggerel with which he made his retort. There is no greater abusive word in Bengali than that of 'Sala' (wife's brother) and Antony accosted his rival as such, although not in so many words.

* "ভজন সাধন জানিনে মা, নিজেত ফিরিঙ্গি।
যদি দয়া করে কৃপা কর হে শিবে মাতঙ্গী॥

† "শুনহে এন্টনি, আমি একটী কথা জানতে চাই।
এসে এদেশে, এবেশে, তোমার গায়ে কেন কুর্ত্তি নাই।"

*"I am happy in Bengal in the costumes of the natives and from having been elected as son-in-law to the father of Thakur Sinha, I have lost my taste for hat and coat."

Such abuse, as I have said, stains that portion of the *kavi* literature which had found favour in cities and large towns. In the cool recesses of the villages the rustic folk assembled to hear tales of sacrifice, resignation, sufferings for love and of tender domestic scenes sung by their unassuming bards. Nor do I know if anywhere else than in India the lowest stratum of society, which the *kaviwallas* mainly represented, could show so much spirituality, love, tender pathos in their literature, chiefly contributed as this was by illiterate men of the lowest classes. The gentler classes, the dilettantes belonging to the aristocracy, favoured the *kaviwallas* in later times only to stamp this folk-lore with their depraved taste; but away from the town, the villages preserved unspoiled, the well of Hindu thought—undefiled, and fit to satisfy the spiritual thirst of those who were humble in spirit, kindly in disposition and who approached God as the Hindu wife approaches her husband—in deep reverence and love.

The town and city—a contrast.

(C) *Religious Songs*

I

Twenty-five years ago in the twilight on the river Khoyai in Sylhet, I saw a boatman rowing a small boat, and as he rowed he sang:

†"Take back thine oar O boatman, I can no longer ply it; all my life I have struggled to bear my boat upstream, but backwards it has gone in spite of me, and now in my old age I find my efforts gone for

The boatman's song.

* "এই বাঙ্গালায় বাঙ্গালীর বেশে আনন্দে আছি।
হ'য়ে ঠাকুরে সিংএর বাপের জামাই, কুস্তিটুপি ছেড়েছি॥"

† "মন মাঝি তোর বৈঠা নেরে, আমি আর বাইতে পারি না।
জনম ভরে বাইলাম তরী রে, তরী ভাইটায় সোয়ায় উজায় না॥
নায়ের গুড়া ভাঙ্গা, ছাপ্পর নড়া রে, আমি আর বাইতে পারি না॥"

naught. The prow of the boat is broken, and the planks are falling away, it can no longer be kept from sinking."

This means that he had fought with his passions all his life trying to control them, and bring the mind under discipline; but he could not. And now when life's ebb-tide was setting in, the despairing boatman could only call upon the Lord to take the charge of the boat of his life for him, conscious, as he was, of his own incapacity to control it, at the last moment.

This song, which I heard at Habiganj in Sylhet, may be heard sung by the rustic folk at Mymensing and Dacca and even here in Calcutta.

Spirituality in rustic-life.

This clear idea of self-control as the supreme good, is not confined in the country to the literate and higher classes. Through long years of the spread of Buddhism and the Vedanta Philosophy, it has filtered down to the lowest stratum of society, and illiterate villagers realise the deepest meaning of this spiritual truth, no less than men of rank and learning.

There are hundreds of songs describing the transitoriness of life and the vanity of human wishes; and there is hardly a rustic in a Bengal village who does not sing to himself some favourite tune having for its burden the mutability of fortune, as, after his weary day of labour, he lays down his tools to retire to rest. Here is another song of the same class:—

* "Tell me who are you, carried on a bamboo bier to the funeral ground? Some of your fellows bear you on their shoulders, while others follow with faggots for the pyre. Your little child is calling for his father. Why so unkind that you have no word for him to-day? Did you not with the sweat of your brow, earn gold mohurs and rupees, wondering from

* "বাঁসের দোলাতে উঠে, কেহে বটে, শ্মশান ঘাটে যাচ্ছ চলে,
সঙ্গে সব কাঠের ভরা, লাউবহরা ভাতবেহারার কাঁধে চড়ে
.....ছেলে কাঁদে বাবা বলে
ও তুমি কওনা কথা, নাইক বাধা, কিসের জন্য এমন হলে?

Delhi to Lahore and thence to Dacca, for the purpose? You strove to heap up wealth. You would not spend for your own comfort a four anna-bit or even a pice. Tell me, brother, how much of this hard-earned money are you carrying with you now?"

These wailing songs are sung by the villagers in chorus. The melody is high-pitched, and the air resounds on all sides with the chant.

If life is truth, death is no less so. If one realises this and turns his back upon the sweets of life, saying that they are not worth caring for since they are so transitory and because they are held in the same cup with poison, what can a materialistic civilisation offer to such a soul?

The mind turns naturally from the horror of death to God. The soul, that has the power to revel in the permanent delights of god-realisation becomes the all-engrossing matter of attention. Though confined in its temporary shed, it may free itself from its "fleshy vesture of decay" and by the process of *Yoga* reach a state of permanent bliss. This is realised by the Indian aspirant of a spiritual life, and all the religious songs of Bengal have this burden.

II

Rama Prasad Sen and poets of his School

Life of Rama Prased Sen

Amongst those who have composed religious songs, there is no higher name than that of Rama Prasad Sen. Born in the quiet village of Kumarahatta, near a station on the East Bengal Railway, in 1718, he was at first influenced by the depraved taste of the court of Raja Krisna Chandra of Navadwip. It may have been owing to satisfy the Raja or his own youthful poetic vanity, that he wrote the indecent poem of Vidya Sundara which was very soon

ঘুরে যে দিল্লি লাহোর, ঢাকার সহর, টাকা মোহর এনেছিলে,
খেলে না পয়সা সিকি, কওনা দেখি, তার কি কিছু সঙ্গে নিলে।"

A popular song by Kangal Harinath.

after its composition, outdone by the more brilliant Vidya-Sundara by Bharat Chandra. Soon after this Rama Prasad retired to his native village, where the Panchamundi or seat on which he sat day and night to practise *Yoga*, is still to be seen.

Rama Prasad was the son of Ramaram Sen, a Vaidya by caste. By the machinations of his relations, the father had been deprived of his inheritance, and the poet passed his early life in poverty. While yet in his teens, he was admitted as an apprentice in the revenue office of a Zamindar and was entrusted with the work of keeping the accounts. One day his master was taken by surprise to find some remarkably beautiful songs scribbled over the pages of the account-book, evidently in the hand-writing of the young apprentice. When he came to know that Rama Prasad was their author, he was so highly pleased with the poetic talents of the young man, that he conferred a pension of Rs. 30 on him, and allowed him to retire to his village and devote himself to the composition of songs. Rama Prasad also obtained a pension from Raja Krisna Chandra, besides a gift of 100 *bighas* of rent-free land in 1758. After his retirement his fame spread all over Bengal, and his songs, composed in the soul-captivating *Ragini* called the *Malasri*, wrought a revolution in the spiritual world.

These songs came spontaneously from the soul. The motherhood of God is a definite realisation in them. Like a child, the poet prattles in them of his griefs and sorrows to the Divine Mother Kali.

Kali, the Mother.

Rama Prasad was a devout worshipper of Kali—Kali with her fierce destructive look, with a complexion dark as the darkest cloud, and with four hands, one holding the decapitated head of a sinner, another a sword, the third offering benediction and the last assurance to those who would not swerve from virtue's path. When we call God all-merciful, kind, and benign there is one element which we try to white-wash to please our fancy. Surely the Creator is also the Destroyer. In vain do we discourse sweetly on the tender

aspects of the Deity; there is no playing fast and loose, no shilly-shallying with another feature of the Divinity, the awe-inspiring, the dark and the terrible, the fierceness of which confronts us at every step. The Saktas have proclaimed the worship of Kali to be only possible in a higher stage of spiritual development. A sweet and complete resignation of one's self to the Divine power knowing it to be terrible, makes the devotee, according to them, grapple better with the problems of life, from a spiritual point of view. Some Sakta interpreters have explained the dark colour of Kali as signifying the mystery that enshrouds the primary cause of the universe. The worshippers of Kali hold her to be at once destructive and protective. Rama Prasad especially speaks of her as the mother who beats the child, while the child clings to her only the closer, crying "Mother! Oh Mother!" Here is his song :—

The Sakta interpreters.

"Though the mother beats him, the child cries 'Mother! Oh Mother!' and clings still tighter to her garment. True I cannot see thee, yet am I not a lost child? I still cry 'Mother! Mother!'—"*

Through the fierce and the terrible he sees the sweet moonlight of grace that suddenly breaks forth, and Kali is no more than a symbol to him,—a symbol of divine punishment, of divine grace, and of divine motherhood. She is as much a symbol as the word God. If the symbol of a word is admitted into the vocabulary, why object to the symbol of a figure in the temple? One appeals to the ear, and the other to the eye. Rama Prasad saw the fierce rolling clouds that darkened the whole horizon, and thought he saw in them the dark and flowing tresses of the Mother. The fire of the funeral ground, reducing a corpse to ashes, reminded him of the destructive dance of the mother. The red glow of the evening sky, with its first stars, wore to his

The terrible, and the beautiful.

* See Sister Nivedita, Kali the Mother, p. 53.

eyes the angry look of the Divine Mother. The storm, the hurricane, the flood, death and disease—these are her companions. The cry of jackal is the chorus heard behind her. The funeral ground is her favourite place; her dark skin, stained with blood, he compares to the black waters of the Jumna upon which floats the full-blown lotus. In the agonies that rend the whole world he sees the chastising rod of the Mother, but says that he is not in the heart affrighted, for he has taken refuge in her grace. The image of Kali works his imagination into lofty poetry. He sang :—

Punishment and grace.

*"See! she does not bind her flowing tresses, nor does she wear any apparel. A sweet smile breaks out upon her lips!"

Sometimes he says, †"All the miseries that I have suffered and am suffering, I know, Oh Mother, to be your mercy alone," for he knew that chastisement opens the blind man's eyes—a cruel process, but sure in the end to lead to truth and bliss.

Sitting at the feet of the image, he often knew it to be no more than a symbol, and he yearned for a revelation of his Mother in his soul. Here is one of his songs.

A mere symbol.

‡"O mind, why do you indulge in vain thoughts!

"This pompous worship and rituals are in vain,—they only increase the vanity of the soul.

"Pray to her secretly, that no one may know of it.

* "ধনী না বাঁধে কবরী, না পরে বাস।
সে বিধুবদনে মধুর হাস॥"

† "বারে বারে যত দুঃখ দিয়েছ, দিতেছ তারা।
সে কেবল দয়া তব জেনেছি মা দুঃখহরা॥"

‡ "মন তোর এত ভাবনা কেনে?
একবার কালী বলে বস্‌রে ধ্যানে॥
ডাঁকজমকে করে পূজা, অহঙ্কার হয় মনে।
তুই লুকিয়ে তাঁরে করবি পূজা, জান্‌বে নারে জগজ্জনে॥

"What is the use of making dolls out of metal, stone and earth?

"Don't you, know, O fool, that the whole universe is the image of Mother?

"You have brought a handful of gram, O shameless one, as an offering to the Mother—to Her who feeds the whole world with delicious food!

"What use, O foolish mind, in making illuminations with lanterns, candle and lamps?

"Let the mind's light grow, and dispel its own darkness, day and night.

"You have brought innocent goats for sacrifice.

"Why not say, 'Victory to Kali!' and sacrifice your passions, which are your real enemies?

"Why these sounds of the drum? Only keep your mind at Her feet and say,—

"Let thy will, O Kali, be fulfilled, and saying so clap your hands."

In another song he says, "Making pilgrimage, visiting shrines is only a physical labour unto you."

But if Rama Prasad condemned empty rituals and the worship of images, it was only at a moment when the mere means

ধাতু, পাষাণ, মাটীর মূর্ত্তি, কাজ কিরে তোর সে গঠনে।
তুমি মনোময় প্রতিমা গড়ি, বসাও হৃদি পদ্মাসনে॥
আলোচাল আর পাকা কলা, কাজ কিরে তোর আয়োজনে।
তুমি ভক্তিসুধা খাইয়ে তাঁরে, তৃপ্ত কর আপন মনে॥
ঝাড়, লণ্ঠন, বাতি দিয়ে কাজ কিরে তোর আলো-জ্বানে।
তুমি মনোময় মাণিক্য জ্বেলে, দাওনা জ্বালুক নিশি দিনে॥
মেষ ছাগল মহিষাদি কাজ কিরে তোর বলিদানে।
তুমি 'জয় কালী' 'জয় কালী' বলে বলি দেও ষড়রিপুগণে॥
প্রসাদ বলে, ঢাক ঢোল কাজ কিরে তোর সে বাজনে।
তুমি 'জয় কালী' বলি দেও করতালি, মন রাখি তাঁর শ্রীচরণে॥

were confounded with the end. In fact the image of Kali was to him a perpetual fountain from which he drew the realisation of the sublime, the terrible and the beautiful in nature; and it inspired in him the most poetic songs that adorn the literature of the Saktas of Bengal.

The image of Kali inspires his songs.

The songs of Rama Prasad still reign supreme in our villages. In the pastoral meadows, amidst sweet scents of herbs and flowers, with the gentle murmurs of the river flowing by, or in the rice-fields where sounds of the cutting of grass or reaping of harvest lend a charm to the tranquil village-scene, one may often hear the *Malasri* songs of Rama Prasad, sung by rustics in the following strain: *"This brief day will pass, sure it is, O Mother Kali,—and all the world will find fault with you that you could not save a sinner like me"! †"My days are spent in vain pleasure; I have forgotten the only reality in life. When I earned money here and there, my wife, my friends, brothers, and sons were all under my control; but now advanced in years, and unable to earn, they treat me unkindly because of my poverty. When death will come and pull me by the hair, they will prepare a bamboo bier for me, and dismiss me from the house with a poor earthen pitcher, stripped of clothing like an ascetic."

The poet of the rural Bengal.

* "নিতান্ত যাবে এদিন, কেবল ঘোষণা রবে গো।
তারা নামে অসংখ্য কলঙ্ক রবে গো॥

† "গেল দিন বৃথা রঙ্গরসে, আমি কাজ হারালাম, কালের বশে।
যখন ধন উপার্জ্জন, করেছিলাম দেশ বিদেশে,
তখন ভাই, বন্ধু, দারা, সুত, সবাই ছিল আপন বশে॥
এখন ধন উপার্জ্জন, হল না আর দশার শেষে।
সেই ভাই, বন্ধু, দারা, সুত, নির্ধন বলে সবায় দোষে॥
যম এসে শিয়রে বসে, ধরবে যখন অগ্রকেশে,
তখন লাজায়ে মাচা, কলসী কাঁচা, বিদায় দিবে দণ্ডীর বেশে॥"

Sister Nivedita says of the works of Rama Prasad, "No flattery could touch a nature so unapproachable in its simplicity. For in these writings we have, perhaps alone in literature, the spectacle of a great poet, whose genius is spent in realising the emotions of a child. William Blake in our own poetry strikes the note that is nearest his, and Blake is by no means his peer. Robert Burns, in his splendid indifference to rank and Whitman in his glorification of common things, have points of kinship with him. But to such a radiant white heat of childlikeness, it would be impossible to find a perfect counterpart. His years do nothing to spoil his quality. They only serve to give him self-confidence and poise. Like a child he is now grave, now gay, sometimes petulant, sometimes despairing. But in the child all this is purposeless. In Rama Prasad there is a deep intensity of purpose. Every sentence he has uttered is designed to sing the glory of his Mother." *

An European critic on Rama Prasad.

The descendants of the poet.

The descendants of the saintly poet still live in the village of Kumarahatta. One of them Babu Kali Pada Sen, a great grandson of Rama Prasad Sen, is working as an Engineer in Orissa. Rama Prasad died in the year 1775 A.D.

His death.

Before concluding my account of Rama Prasad, I quote two more songs of his which are very popular amongst the villages.

Two songs.

(1)

†" No more shall I call you by that sweet name, mother."

" You have given me woes unnumbered and reserved many more for me, I know!

* Kali the Mother, page, 48.

† "মা মা বলে আর ডাকবনা।
যা দিয়েছ, দিতেছ কতই যাতনা॥

" I once had a home and family, and now you have made me such that I am disowned by all.

" What other ills may yet befall me I cannot tell.

" Who knows but that I may have to beg my bread from door to door? Indeed I am expecting it.

" Does not a child live when his mother is dead?

" Rama Prasad was a true son of his mother;

—but you being the mother have treated your son like an enemy.

" If in the presence of his mother, the son can suffer so much,

What is the use of such a mother to him?"

(2)

*" O mother, for what offence have I been placed for this long term of life in this prison house of the world!

I rise in the morning to work; O how hard do I work!

" I wander about in all directions to gain filthy lucre.

" O what delusion possesses me!

" And, O mother, how perfect are the enticements by which you bind my soul to this vain world!

আমি ছিলেম গৃহবাসী, বানালি সন্ন্যাসী,
আর কি ক্ষমতা রাখ এলোকেশী ॥
না হয় দ্বারে দ্বারে যাব, ভিক্ষা মেগে খাব।
মা ব'লে কি তার ছেলে বাঁচে না॥
রামপ্রসাদ ছিল গো মায়েরই পুত্র।
মা হ'য়ে হলি গো ছেলেরই শত্রু ॥
মা বর্ত্তমানে, এ দুঃখ সন্তানে,
মা থেকে তার কি ফল বল না ॥*

* "তারা কোন্ অপরাধে এ দীর্ঘ মেয়াদে
সংসার গারদে রাখিস্ বল ॥
আমি প্রাতঃকালে উঠি, কতই যে মা খাটি,
ছুটাছুটি করি ভূমণ্ডল ॥
বৃথা অর্থ অভিলাষী, মায়ামদে ভাসি।
তারা এলোকেশী জানিস কি কৌশল ॥

"Bringing me down to this world, unnumbered are the troubles you have crowded into my destiny.

"They burn me like fire day and night,
I no longer wish for life, O Mother."

Other song-writers

After Rama Prasad, a host of song-writers appeared who imitated his high spiritual strain. Amongst them the following writers attained marked success :—

Rama Krisna.

1. Maharaja Rama Krisna of Natore, son and successor of the far-famed Rani Bhavani of Natore, and a contemporary of Rama Prasad Sen, Maharaja Rama Krisna was one of the famous princely saints of India. We have not succeeded in tracing many of his songs, but the few that have came down to us show a high spiritual tone. One is quoted here :—

*"If only my mind can reach realisation you may do with me whatever you will; no matter if you place me on a bed of sand. Only recite the name of the divine Mother in my ears.

"This body of mine is so difficult to control; it yields to passion.

"O Bhola, my guide, bring me my rosary. I shall throw it into the Ganges, no more formality."

Kamala Kanta.

2. Kamala Kanta Bhattacharyya, born in the last part of the 18th century. He was formerly an inhabitant of Ambikanagar in Kalna, but removed to Kotalhata in Burdwan in the year 1800. He was the

এনে ভূমণ্ডলে, কতই দুঃখ দিলে
আমার নিরবধি জ্বলে দুঃখানল ॥
আমার বাঁচিতে সাধ নাই।"

* "আমার মন বধিরে ভোলে,
তবে বালীর শয্যায়, কালীর নাম, রেখো কর্ণমূলে।
দেহ আপন বশী নয়, সে রিপুর সঙ্গে চলে ॥
এনে দে ভোলা, জপের মালা, ভাসাই গঙ্গাজলে ॥"

religious preceptor of Maharaj Tejaschandra of Burdwan. I may here give one of his songs :—

* " In whatever station I may be placed, it all becomes blessed, if I forget thee not. O Mother! this life, the bitter cup of life, is a souce of bliss if I can feel thy grace in my heart. Ashes and clods of earth, or precious jewels, lodging beneath a tree for want of a roof or a seat on the royal throne—to Kamala Kanta all these are of equal value, when in his heart thou dwellest."

3. Dewan Raghunath Ray, born in 1750 A.D. at the village Chupi in Burdwan. His ancestors held the high function of Dewan in the court of the Maharajas of Burdwan, and on the death of his father Dewan Braja Kisore, Raghunath obtained the appointment in the course. He was a profound scholar in Sanskrit and Persian, and composed a cansiderable number of religious songs in Bengali. He died in 1836.

4. Dewan Ramadulal Nandi. He was born at Kalikaccha in Tippera in the year 1785. He acquired a mastery of Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali. He obtained the apointment of Sheristadar in the Noakhali Collectorate under Mr. Haliday; and after some time became the Minister in the Court of the Maharaja of Tippera. Ramadulal died in the year 1851. Here is one of his songs.

Ramadulal

† "O Mother, I know that you play at magic with our souls.

* যখন যেমন রূপে রাখিবে আমারে।
সকলি সফল যদি না ভুলি তোমারে॥
জনম, করম, দুঃখ, সুখ করি মানি।
যদি নিরখি অন্তরে শ্যামা জলদ বরণী।
বিভূতি ভূষণ, কি রতন মণি কাঞ্চন।
তরুতলে বাস, কি রাজ সিংহাসন,
কমলাকান্ত উভয় সম সাধন জননি,
নিবস যদি হৃদয় মন্দিরে গো মা॥"

† "ওগো জেনেছি, জেনেছি, তারা,
তুমি জান মা ভোজের বাজি।

By whatever name one calls you, you seem to be pleased with it.

The Burmese call you Phara; the Europeans call you Lord, the Saiyads, the Pathans and the Mughals call you Khoda.

The Saktas know you as Giver of all strength.

The Saivas call you Siva.

The Sauras call you Sun.

The Vaisnavas worship you as Radhika.

You are Ganesa to Ganapatyas, Kuvera to the Yaksas, Visvakarma to the artisan class; and Bador to the boatmen.

Says Ramadulal, this is no miracle :—

It is quite true that my mind has become debased by thinking the one supreme god to be many."

(D) THE YATRAS OR POPULAR THEATRES

Unlike the *kavi*, a *yatra*-party consists of male performers only, the part of women being performed generally by youths. The old *yatras* were a sort of melodrama,* the dialogues being mainly conducted in songs. There was no scenic representation of any kind. On the bare ground, a large carpet was spread, and the actors appeared upon it, all at one time. They usually

যে তোমায় যেমনি ভাবে,
তাতে তুমি মা হও রাজি ॥
মগে বলে ফরা, তারা, লর্ড বলে ফিরিঙ্গী যারা,
খোদা বলে ডাকে তোমায়,
মোগল, পাঠান, সৈয়দ, কাজী।
শাক্তে তোমায় বলে শক্তি,
শিব তুমি শৈবের উক্তি,
সৌর বলে সূর্য্য তুমি, বৈরাগী কয় রাধিকাজী।
গাণপত্য বলে গণেশ, যক্ষ বলে তুমি ধনেশ।
শিল্পী বলে বিশ্বকর্ম্মা, বদর বলে নায়ের মাঝি ॥
শ্রীরামদুলালে বলে, বাজি নয় এ জেন ফলে,
এক ব্রহ্ম দ্বিধা ভেবে,
মন আমার হয়েছে পাজি ॥"

* This word is used in its technical, not popular, sense.

began their performance by playing on musical instruments only, unaccompanied by any vocal music. The deep voiced *khol*, accompanied by the shrill clang of the *kartal*, produced a loud musical chord which summoned the people of surrounding villages to assemble at the place of performance. This loud music would continue for a couple of hours, after which the play would begin in earnest. A green room, so to speak, was reserved for the actors to change their dress. Sometimes one would be observed to throw away his false whiskers, and dress himself as a woman, in full view of the audience; the faces were not very clean shaved, so that while playing the serious part of a princess or a lady of high rank an actor might often be observed to bear, on his chin remnants of the beard or moustache that had adorned his previous masculine part. The performers including those who were dressed as women, would sing in chorus; and the master-singer was always behind them and could sometimes be seen pulling the ear of some erring lad who could not pitch his tone correctly to the high notes of the musical instruments. Another actor, while delivering a speech, might be tempted by the sight of a *hooka*, and in the midst of a pathetic display of feeling, be seen to stop for a moment to snatch a puff of smoke, so that the first line of a song would coincide with the curl of smoke that issued from his mouth. Sometimes we may see the mother of the hero weeping over his dead body; suddenly she springs to her feet, and takes her place in the middle of the chorus, which bursts into a song of grief; at the same moment, the slain hero himself rises, in order to swell the volume of the music! The want of scenic representation was made up for by the simple declaration of the actor that he had now removed to a different place. Thus, Narada the sage, who happens to be in the heaven of Visnu, declares that he will now visit the Vrinda groves, and, advancing a few steps from where he stood, begins to describe the scenes of *Vrindavana*, as if he had now actually traversed all the distance between heaven and earth. In these *yatras* of the past, the audience

Its defects and incongruities.

comprised people of all ranks, for it was a free entertainment to which all were welcome, held at the cost of the master of the house. Early comers generally occupied the front places, irrespective of their position, and late comers had the disadvantage of back seats; but people did not mind this. They often stood on their feet enjoying the songs for hours together without seeming to feel the inconveniences to which they were subject.

Though defective in so many ways—and from a superficial point of view the whole performance was marked by incongruity and want of all aesthetic perception,—yet the old *yatras* had the power to captivate the soul and keep men and women transfixed for hours at a time. The songs describing the scenes of Vaikuntha, the heaven of Visnu, of Amaravati, the heaven of Indra, or of the Alaka, the heaven of Kuvera, couched in rich poetic words and set to pleasing modes of music, made up for all want of painted scenes. They suggested romantic situations, and carried the audience to heights of imagination where no painter's brush could have led them. The outward anomalies, the defective and even grotesque elements, were all forgiven and forgotten. These songs, thrilling with pathos, gave life to the performance, and the audience laughed and cried as though they fully believed in the joys and sorrows of the characters of the play. A very familiar personality in the old *yatras* was Radha; she would come with flowing tresses frenzied by Krisna's desertion, and address the flowers, Malati and Kunda, as if they were her friends, asking them where her Krisna was. She would then recollect the great love which Krisna bore to her; how he would play with her ringlets, saying, "blessed am I in the touch of thy tresses"; how he would himself paint her feet with *alta* and bedeck her hair with flowers and garlands; how when looking at her face tears would start into his eyes without any cause, and he would call them tears of joy. He who could not bear a moment's parting had now deserted her. The maids were

Redeemed by rich poetry.

Radha deserted by Krisna.

calling him a knave, a hypocrete and faithless lover. But Radha could not bear that Krisna should be reviled by others though she was dying for love of him.

The master-singer.

The master-singer is generally expert in the theological lore of the Vaisnavas. He comes frequently into the midst of the performers and interprets this love as divine love, making a little commentary aside. Chandravali, who was a rival of Radha in Krisna love, comes to the Vrinda groves and sees that Radha is lying in a state of unconsciousness, the maids fannning her with lotus-leaves and weeping at her distress. Chandra would not at any other time have cared to see her rival, but now the common grief of parting with Krisna has turned her into a sympathiser and friend. She sees Radha, and sings :—

The laments of Chandravali.

* " How remarkably handsome is Radha ! I never saw her so closely before. When she stood by the side of Krisna, and smiled, and talked, how beautiful did she look ! Krisna, lying on a bed of flowers, would seem to wear her on his bosom, as one wears a precious necklace. Alas, she, the beloved of Krisna, now lies in the dust ! How fine, how peerless are her feet that Krisna was never weary of praising those feet that he would softly touch to paint with scarlet *alta*. When these tender feet would trip over the thorny paths of the forest to meet with Krisna, one could almost have wished to

* "একই রূপের রূপসী রাই, আমি নয়ন ভরে দেখি নাই।
যখন বঁধুর বামে দাঁড়াইত, আবার হেসে হেসে কথা কইত,
তখন এইনা মুখে—মুখের কতই যেন শোভা হ'ত।
বঁধু থেকে কুসুম শয্যায়, হৃদয়ে রাখ্‌ত যায়,
বঁধুর সে ধন আজ ধূলায় গড়াগড়ি যায়॥
অতুল বাতুল কিবা চরণ দুখানি,
আল্‌তা পরা'ত বঁধু কতই বাখানি,

place her own bare bosom on the road, so that she might have stepped on it."

When the singers had sung this song, the master-singer would approach and draw the attention of the audience to the description. He would say—Radha's physical charms are not what the poet refers to. In all the points of this description one may see that it is the love of Krisna that is described by the poet as constituting her beauty. Only when she was smiling and talking with Krisna, would she look charming in Chandra's eyes, and not at any other time. Chandra regrets her present condition, because she was the object of so much care to Krisna; she offers her own bosom for the treading of Radha's feet, when she may go out to meet *him*! In all this she indicates her love for Krisna as the only point that contributes to her beauty. "Love for God can alone adorn a man—neither wealth, nor physical charms, nor power."

The interpretation.

The pathos created by Krisna's going to Mathura was the never-ending theme of the old *yatras*, and it was a matter, the lightest touch of which was sure to melt the hearts of all true Bengalis. Yasoda, the mother of Krisna, wept and said to her lord Nanda—

* 'O Prince of Gokul, I dreamt a dream: Krisna came to me and disappeared.'

and she details the dream by referring to little incidents which are full of tender pathos.

The shepherd boys sing in chorus.

এ কোমল চরণে যখন চলিত হাঁটিয়ে,
বঁধুর দরশন লাগি গো অনুরাগে,—
হেন বাঞ্ছা হোত যে পাতিয়ে দেই হিয়ে॥"

Rai Unmadini by Krisna Kamala.

• "শুন ব্রজরাজ, স্বপনেতে আজ, দেখা দিয়ে গোপাল কোথা লুকালে"

Svapnavilas by Krisna Kamala.

The grief of the play-mates

* "Have you left us, O Krisna, because we took you for a common play-fellow, and did not pay you the tribute of worship that you deserved at our hands? How often, when playing, we quarrelled and abused you! Did you take these things to heart, and desert us, though we were so deeply devoted to you? We often beat you, or carried you on our shoulders, and rode on yours. Often we ate first, and gave you the remnants, calling you by all familiar names. Have you, for all these, forsaken us, Oh beloved Krisna?"

Yatras excelled the theatres.

So the shepherd boys sang; and as they sang they wept, and the audience was moved. All thought themselves in those Vrinda groves, where *Kadamba* trees rose upon the sight, fringing the lovely horizon on the banks of the dark-watered Jumna,—those groves that the tears of the milk-maids and the shepherds have hallowed for ever. The *yatras* without any regular stage, without scenery, without the artistic display of costumes, could rouse emotions which now-a-days we scarcely experience, while witnessing semi-European performances given on the stages of the Calcutta theatres.

The subjects of the *yatras* were mainly episodes in the life of Krisna. There were, however, other subjects also taken up by different parties. The story of Vidya-Sundara on the lines of Bharat Chandra's poem, was adopted by a class of *yatrawallas*, of whom Gopal Uriya heads the list. The Vidya-Sundara *yatras* had no serious element in them. They were in high favour with the

The Vidya-Sundara *yatras*.

* "তাই ভেবে কি ভাইরে সুবল, ছেড়ে গেছে প্রাণের কানাই ;
আমরা সামান্য ভেবে, কখন মান্য করি নাই।
খেলা বেলায় করি দ্বন্দ, কত যে বলেছি মন্দ,
সে মন্দ কি ভেবে মন্দ, ত্যজেছে ব্রজের সম্বন্ধ ॥
কত মেরেছি, ধরেছি, কাঁধে করেছি, চড়েছি
আপনি খেয়ে, খাওয়ায়েছি, তোতকার করেছি সবাই ॥"

Rai Unmadini by Krisna Kamala.

light-brained aristocracy who enjoyed the humour, dances and witty sayings in the play, and as I have said on a previous page, the songs and dances of Hira, the flower-woman, formed by far the most important and attractive features of the Vidya-Sundara *yatras*.

Gopal Uriya.

Gopal Uriya was born about the year 1819 at Jajpur in Cuttack. When a boy of nineteen he came to Calcutta, and, being very poor, adopted the calling of a hawker,—selling bananas. One evening he was passing along a lane of Bowbazar Street, where Babu Radha Mohan Sarkar, a distinguished noble man, was busy with the rehearsal of a Vidya-Sundara *yatra* which he had organised. Gopal was crying 'good bananas, sir,' and only for fun he was called in before the party, where question upon question was put to him. To the surprise of the jovial company, they found that the lad was remarkably witty, and had an excellent voice. He was at once admitted into the troupe, and soon after began to compose songs himself. Becoming trained in music by the favour of his patron Babu Radha Mohan Sarkar, he organized a party which far outdid the fame of all other Vidya-Sundara *yatrawallas*. He died about the year 1859.

Other *yatras*.

Besides the Vidya-Sundara *yatras*, there were the Chandi *yatras*, the Manasar Bhasan *yatras*, the Rama *yatras* and other *yatras* which had for the subject-matter of their songs mythological stories from the Mahabharata.

There are no authentic records from which we may trace the early history of the *yatrawallas*. From the time of Chaitanya, *yatras* have flourished in Bengal, and developed their melodramatic character.

A brief history of the *yatrawallas*.

The first great *yatrawalla*, of whom we have any information, was Paramananda Adhikari, who lived in Birbhum more than 200 years ago. The subject of his play was Kaliyadamana. The next *yatrawalla*, who earned a reputation in the same subject,

was Sudam Subal Adhikari. Lochan Adhikari, who flourished after Sudam had left the field, had two favourite subjects, in which he pre-eminently excelled, one was the Akrura Samvad or the advent of Akrura at Vrindavan to take away Krisna and Balarama, under orders of the King Kansa of Mathura. The other subject was Nimai-Sannyasa, or Chaitanya's taking the ascetic's vow. It is said that Lochan made so great an impression on Raja Nava Kissen of Sobhabazar and Babu Banamali Sarkar of Kumartuli, by his songs, that these noblemen under a sort of spell, made him gifts of immoderate amounts of money. Other noblemen of Calcutta, it is said, did not venture to engage the party fearing lest they also might be led, under infatuation, to pay him rewards beyond their means, as the two other noblemen had done. Gobinda Adhikari, an inhabitant of Krisnagar (1798 to 1870), Pitambar Adhikari of Katwa and Kalachand Pal of Vikrampur, Dacca, were the latter-day luminaries in this field. Premchand Adhikari, Ananda Adhikari and Jaychandra Adhikari of Pataihat obtained celebrity in the Rama *yatra*. Guru Prasad Vallabh of Farasdanga and Lausen Badal of Burdwan excelled in the Chandi *yatra* and the Manasar Bhasan *yatra* respectively.

The greatest of them,—Krisna Kamala; his life.

But we have not yet named the greatest *yatrawala* that Bengal has ever seen. We have reserved a notice of Krisna Kamala Gosvami for the more elaborate treatment that he deserves at our hands.

Krisna Kamala was born in 1810 at Bhajanghata in the district of Nadia. He belonged to one of those few families of Vaidya Gosvamis in Bengal who claimed Brahmin disciples. Krisna Kamala's great ancestor Sada Siva, a friend of Chaitanya Deva, was reputed for his great piety. Krisna Kamala received his first lessons in Sanskrit grammar at Vrindavan, where his father Muralidhar had taken him when only six years of age. He was a handsome boy, and by his pleasing manners attracted the notice of a millionnaire who desired to adopt him as a son, and make him the heir to his vast fortune. On this, Muralidhar

fled from Vrindavan with his son, who was then only twelve years old.

His poems.

Returning home, Krisna Kamala to please his mother Jamuna Devi, wrote a melodrama on Chaitanya which greatly pleased the village people of Bhajanghata who marked the author as a young prodigy. When in his twenty-fifth year, his father died, and the poet left Bhajanghata and came to Dacca with his patron and disciple Rama Kisore. He composed his great *yatra* poem, the Svapnavilas in 1835. It was at once taken up and played by the amateur parties of Dacca. The success, this work attained, was unique. The songs of Svapnavilas were in the mouth of every one in Eastern Bengal, and even now, though about a century has passed since the publication of the poem, there is scarcely any old man or woman amongst the higher classes of that place who has not at least some songs from the book by heart. In a country where a lyrical element predominates, and where devotional feelings are preferred to action, songs are bound to occupy the same place in the popular estimation, as does drama in other countries where work and not sentiment is the motto. We cannot look for a Garrick here. A Krisna Kamala or a Gobinda Adhikari will better fulfil the natural cravings of the soul that longs to hear of lofty sentiment and of the highest flights of love. In the preface to Vichitravilas, a subsequent *yatra* poem by Krisna Kamala, the author writes about Svapnavilas: *"The public probably liked the book; otherwise why should there be a sale of nearly 20,000 copies within so short a space of time?" The sale of 20,000 copies of the book within a few weeks in Eastern Bengal, where a demand for printed books had not yet been created, was quite a phenomenon at that time, and showed the wonderful popularity which the poem had attained.

* "বোধ হয় ইহাতে সাধারণের প্রীতি সাধিত হইয়াছে, নতুবা প্রায় বিংশতি সহস্র পুস্তক স্বল্প দিনের মধ্যে নিঃশেষিত হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কি?"

The best *yatra* by Krisna Kamala, however, was his Rai Unmadini which appeared shortly after the Svapnavilas. After this poem had seen the light, there were produced in succession the Bharatamilana, the Nimai Sannyasa, the Gostha and other works.

The *Bharatamilana* describes that episode of the Ramayana in which Bharata meets Rama in the forest with prayers for his return to Ayodhya and acceptance of the kingdom. The Nimai Sannyasa describes Chaitanya's entering into the holy order of ascetics. All other works relate to episodes of the life of Krisna. His two best works are the Rai Unmadini and the Svapnavilas, and in both of them he describes in highly poetic language the woes of the inmates of Vrindavan and especially those of Radha caused by parting from Krisna. And we may observe that in these poems the author, while giving the noblest expression to the tender feelings of a woman's love, takes the real cue from Chaitanya's life. We have read many speeches in the poems attributed to Radha, which in reality have been borrowed from Chaitanya-Charitamrita and other works on Chaitanya, only rendered into more refined forms, as the matter passed out of the hands of biographers into those of a poet. The Radha described by Krisna Kamala typifies and represents the frenzied condition of Chaitanya in divine communion and has been portrayed in a very exquisite form. Krisna never came back to the Vrinda groves but the *Bhavasammelana* or union in spirit is described by all Vaisnava poets. The significance of this is that a material loss, though fraught with pain for the time being, is bound to prove a spiritual gain to the faithful in the long run. Our souls feel a craving for love, and imagine that this desire is satisfied by union with some particular individual. But circumstances are not within our control, and when we encounter sorrow in our love, the mind seeks happiness in its own resources, and under favourable condition of spiritual development, may find the fountain of love within itself,—a perennial stream which never dries

The conception of union in spirit.

up. This is the *Bhavasammelana*, and in it the lost are found permanently, and the heart satisfied for ever. Nature offers in all directions what seemed to have been lost in a particular spot, and the blessed soul rises from its external sorrow stronger, freer, and happier, realising union which can never be interrupted. The Vaisnava poets were always averse to tragedy; but as they did not find it mentioned anywhere in the sacred texts that Krisna ever returned in the flesh to the Vrinda groves, they created this *Bhavasammelana* in its place,—the ever-blissful subjective union, in which the mind, freed from the trammels of its material environment, revels in a delight, the fountain of which is within one's self.

We have already on pages 455-57 and 610-12 quoted passages from Krisna Kamala's works. I give below an extract from his *Sankirtan* poems in which the shepherd-boys importune Yasoda to allow him to go with them to the forest.

The importunities of the playmates of Krisna

* "Make Krisna ready, O mother Yasoda, to go with us to the field!

"The time is already up—the time for our sport.

"How long must we delay our wood-land games?

"Give us your Krisna, mother, for the day. You ask, what care shall we take of him?

"We shall carry his flute and his rod; and we shall place him in our midst.

"He is so merry! He dances as he goes!

"When the rays of the sun are strong, we shall take him to the cool shadow of a tree, and let him rest; and we shall do our best to give him pleasure.

* ও মা যশোদা গো মা গো সাজায়ে,
তোর শ্যামচাঁদ লয়ে যাই বনে।
খেলার বেলা যায় মা বয়ে,
তখন যাবে গোচারণে।
ওমা সুধাও, সুধাও গো, তোর শ্যামসুধাকরে,
কানাইর বেণু বেত্র লয়ে আমরা যাব ব'য়ে,
যাবে নেচে চলে নীলরতনে;

" If the way is thorny, we can carry him on our shoulders.

" And if we see him pale, we shall give him the fruits of the forest to eat.

" If he goes not with us, whom shall we adorn with wild flowers under the cool shadow of the *tamala* tree?

" Whom shall we crown with peacock feathers and whose fine hair shall we plait with the *bakula* buds?

" The sound of whose flute shall charm our ears, and whose embrace shall cool our bodies?

" The peacock, the cuckoo, the bee, the *Sari* and the *Suka* in the forest-bowers are waiting with heads uplifted to catch the sound of Krisna's flute.

" Help him to dress in his yellow cloth in the manner in which he appears peculiarly charming, O mother, and allow him to come with us.

" In the green pasture under the *kadamba* tree, we shall make him sit, and weave a garland with the *kunda*, the

দিবাকরকর প্রবল হইলে,
রহে কালশশী বসি তরুতলে,
কমল বল্লভে ও প্রাণবল্লভে,
শোয়াইয়া সেবি রাখালগণে।
সাধের কানাই না হলে, কদম্বের মূলে,
কারে সাজাইব বনফুল দিয়ে।
শিখিপুচ্ছকুলে, বকুলমুকুলে, চূড়া বেঁধে দিব কার চিকণ চুলে।
কার বংশীরবে শ্রবণ জুড়াবে,
কার আলিঙ্গনে অঙ্গ শীতল হবে।
শিখি-সারি-শুক-মধুকর-পিক
সকলে উৎসুক আছে ঊর্দ্ধমুখে।
ঘড়া ক'রে বেঁধে দেগো, পীতাম্বরে পীতাম্বর।
বনফুলে সাজাইব আমরা নিয়ে বনান্তর॥
গোচারণ স্থলে, কদম্বের মূলে,
বসাইয়া সাধে দিব সাজাইয়ে।
কুন্দ সেফালিকে, কেতকী, মল্লিকে,
নাগকেশর, টগর, চম্পকে,
নীল শতদলে, কদম্ব মুকুলে,
গেঁথে হার গলে দিব পরাইয়ে।

sephalika, the *ketaki*, the *mallika*, the *nagakesara*, the *tagara*, the *champaka*, the blue lily and the *kadamba* flower, and put it round his neck.

"Do not hesitate, O mother, but allow him to go with us!

"Look at the cows; they will neither graze, nor drink, if they see not the sweet face of Krisna.

"They will not even low, so long as they do not hear Krisna's flute, but will remain as mute as statues.

"When the flute of Krisna is sounded, how quick and great is the response from all quarters.

"The sages see their highest visions, the stone melts and the Jumna stops her course.

"Your son, O mother, has magic arts! If he sounds his flute, the very cows understand and instantly obey his command."

Krisna Kamal lived the high life worthy of a true Vaisnava. He died in 1888, at the advanced age of 78, but all his best works had been written within the first fifties of the 19th century; hence we include him within the range of our treatise. When Krisna Kamal was brought to the Ganges at Chinsurah and his last moment arrived, his eldest son Nitya Gopal Gosvami wept like a child, lamenting that after the death of the master of the house, he would be quite unfit to govern it. The dying poet, who had till then retained his senses and power of speech, addressed

নিঃসন্দেহে সে মা কানাই, ধরি তোর যুগল চরণে,
ওমা বেণু না দেখিলে তাহার বিধুমুখ,—
অধোমুখে রয় গো, মুখে না লয় তৃণগণে।
যখন শুনে বেণুরব, করে বেণু রব,
নহিলে নীরব রয় সকলে।
কানাই যখন করে বেণু ধ্বনি, ত্রিভুবনে হয় জয় জয় ধ্বনি,
মুনিগণ মন করে আকর্ষণ, পাষাণ গলে, হয় যমুনা অচল।
তোমার কুমার মাগো, না জানি কি গুণ জানে,
ধেনুর সঙ্কেত করে বনে চরায় বেণুগণে।"

The dying poet's words.

his weeping son and said* :—"My son, do not weep. I really never knew that I was the master of the house. I knew you all to belong to God and as such it was my duty to offer my humble services to you all my life. Though you were my children, I kept away from my mind the vanity of knowing myself as the master. Guide yourselves in the light of this principle, and you will be ever happy."

Yatra poems with prose.

We have a few *yatra* poems interspersed with prose by authors who lived in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some of these are mentioned below :—

1. Duti Samvad by Rama Vallabh.

2. Vidya-Sundara Gayan. The name of the author is not known.

Here is a song of Hira, the flower-woman from this work :—

*"I am but one, still to how many do I give pleasure!

"All is incomplete where I am not.

"When I do not go to the good damsels of the neighbourhood, interviews with their lovers cannot be arranged and the pain caused by separation kills them.

"If I do not come to the garden, the flowers and buds are all plucked by unknown hands."

3. Manasa Mangal Gayan. This work begins with a conversation between the manager of the *yatra* party, and a constable of the Raja's palace where the *yatra* is to be held.

* "বৎস, কাতর হইও না। তোমরা গিরিধারীর; এই জ্ঞানে এতাবৎ আমি তোমাদের সেবা করিয়াছি, পালন করি নাই। প্রতিপালনের কর্ত্তা গিরিধারীকে জানিও। এই ভাব লইয়া সংসার করিও; কষ্ট পাইবে না।"

From the biography of Krisna Kamal, by his son Nitya Gopal Gosvami.

* একলা প্রাণে কোন্‌দিক যাব, পড়েছি বিষম দায়।
যে দিকে না চেয়ে দেখি, সে দিকে সব ব'য়ে যায়।
পাড়াতে না গেলে পরে, বিরহিণী প্রাণে মরে,
মালঞ্চে না গেলে পরে, কুসুম কলি সব লুটে খা'য়॥"

† "*Const.*: Who are you making an uproar here, at this late hour of the night?

Manager: We are *yatrawallas*, and pray who are you, brother, yourself?

Const.: I am the Raja's constable.

Manager: And, answer me! Where are you going at this late hour of the night?

Const.: I am going to call Kalua, the sweeper of the palace.

[*Enters Kalua, the Sweeper.*]

Song (in Hindi).

"I do not know who it is that calls me.

"For the whole day I have been in attendance at the palace.

"I have swept the roads, and removed all dirt and filth.

"Why I am called again, I do not know."

Farcical episodes.

In old *yatras*, farcical episodes were introduced, by way of relief, in intervals of a serious play, and the above indicates the way they were introduced.

A *yatra* performance usually commenced at 4 A.M., and ended at noon, thus lasting for 8 hours or more; of these, as I have said, the first one or two hours were spent in playing a hiah-pitched clamorous music, the intention of which was to advertise

† "জমাদার। তোমরা কোন লোক হে, মহারাজকা নগরমে এত্তা রাতমে ঝুমঝাম্ কিয়া?

যাত্রাওয়ালা। হে, আমরা যাত্রাওয়ালা গাইন হে। আরে ভাই, তোম্ লোক কোন্ হে।

জমাদার। আরে হাম্ মহারাজকা জমাদার হে।

যাত্রাওয়ালা। আরে রাতমে কাহা চল্‌তে হো।

জমাদার। আরে হাম কালুয়া হাড়ী বোলানেকো আনে চলতা হায়।

কালুয়া হাড়ীর গান।

"মেরা কোন্ বোলা হে চিন্‌তে নারি,
সারা রোজ হুজুরমে দিয়ে হাজিরি।
ঝাড়ুভি দিয়া, সাফ্‌ভি কিয়া,
ফের কিস্তরে বোলাতে হে বুঝ্‌তে নারি॥"

the commencement of the performance to the villagers. The farcical scenes which were introduced at intervals were generally called সং (*sam*), and the children who accompanied their mothers to the place of performance, and who could not understand anything of the main play, were greatly interested in সং. In fact they would doze the whole of the time that was occupied in the enactment of the serious portions of the performance, and hailed these farcical scenes with great delight, noting each point with gaping mouths, and sometimes indicating their high gratification by the merry sounds of juvenile laughter.

V. The three great poets with whom the age closed—Dasarathi—Ramanidhi Gupta—Iswar Gupta

Before we close the narrative of our old literature, and enter upon that which is stamped with English influence, we propose to say something about a few more writers of the old school and notice the folk tales prevalent in the country from ancient times. Let us first deal with the three poets who lived in the early part of the 19th century. Though by the time they flourished, English rule had become settled in the country, yet their writings bear no traces of European influence. They belonged to the old school and exercised a great influence on contemporary society and literature. These three poets are 1. Dasarathi Rai 2. Ramnidhi Gupta and 3. Iswar Chandra Gupta.

Dasarathi Rai

Dasarathi Rai was born at Vandamura in Burdwan in the year 1804. His father Devi Prasad Rai was a man of small means. So the young poet lived with one of his maternal uncles at the village of Pila where he ultimately settled. He got a smattering of Bengali and became an apprentice in the office of an indigo-planter at Sakai on a monthly pay of Rs. 3. Here he fell in love with a low-caste woman of ill-fame. Her name was Aksay Patini, and she was commonly called Aka Bai. This woman had organised a party of *kaviwallas* for whom songs and speeches were now composed by our poet.

This made him very unpopular at home, and on one occasion in an open competition of extempore verse-making he was lashed by the taunts of a rival *kaviwalla*. The mother and uncle of Dasarathi insisted on his leaving his mean occupation, associated as it was, with an ignominous passion. Dasu could not withstand the importunities of his relations, least of all, of his mother; for in spite of the low calling that he had adopted, he was a good Brahmin and his family enjoyed considerable respectability in the neighbourhood. Dasu left the party of *kaviwallas*, and became the author and inventor of a peculiar kind of doggerel—called *Panchali*. These *Panchalis* took for their main subject those incidents in Krisna's life which in the popular belief of Bengal were indispensable to songs. But Dasu adopted other subjects also, favoured by the moderns and possessing contemporary interest. Such for instance are his poems on Widow marriage, on the Lily and the Bee, and other subjects.

Panchali.

The popularity of these poems, which he made it his profession to recite and sing, was immense throughout the country and though he had started by charging only Rs. 3 a night, for reciting and singing one of his *Panchalis*, he was able to increase his fee to Rs. 150 per night, and the number of engagements that he made was so large that he had to refuse many. He grew rich in his old age, made a nice garden-house at Pila on the bank of the Ganges, and lived comfortably till his death in 1857.

Dasu Rai's *Panchali* shows an amazing command over the Bengali language. For one who had had no Sanskrit education and had acquired only an indifferent knowledge of Bengali, his works deserve high praise. Alliteration and punning were his *forte*, and his verses, which flow with remarkable facility, sparkle with humour and wit. The words that he chooses are generally Sanskritic, not pompous, and the effect produced on the ear by their combination is singularly pleasing. When he is vulgar, we know that he is addressing the mob, to whom the grossest obscenities

Alliteration, punning and vulgarities.

would be welcome, and he spares no jokes, no hit, however indecent to pander to their vile tastes. He was essentially a poet of the masses. By his sweet doggerels, full of alliterations, by his obscenities, by the display of wit which was often of the coarsest kind, we know that the scum of the society were gathered to hear him, and his aim was to please them at any cost. His poems are full of display of words, of thoughts and of wit. They prove that he was trying to create an impression, and was always conscious of his brilliant talent. Take for instance this passage :—

* "Faith adorns a scholar; lightning adorns the cloud; the husband's love adorns a woman; the sacrificial ashes adorn an ascetic; the crops adorn the earth; its own lustre adorns a jewel, the fruits adorn a tree; water adorns a river; the lily adorns water; and the bee adorns a lily; his sweet hum adorns the bee; the eyes adorn the body; and charity adorns a kind-hearted man, he gives it with sweet words."

These couplets while scarcely bearing more than any commonplace sense, are, however, remarkable for their jingling alliteration—the rhyming being singularly happy. The poet goes on with his catalogue of what adorns what, for pages, and it appears that unless one forces him to stop, he will never end this strain. Many such verses would be delivered *extempore* during a single performance and bear evidence of being carried to the utmost limit of the poet's command over the languge, because he was being

Goes on being clapped and cheered

* "পণ্ডিতের ভূষণ ধর্ম্মজ্ঞানী, মেঘের ভূষণ সৌদামিনী।
সতীর ভূষণ পতি, রত্নের ভূষণ জ্যোতি।
মৃত্তিকার ভূষণ শস্য, যোগীর ভূষণ ভস্ম,
বৃক্ষের ভূষণ ফল, নদীর ভূষণ জল,
জলের ভূষণ পদ্ম, পদ্মের ভূষণ মধুকর,
মধুকরের ভূষণ গুণ্ গুণ্ স্বর,
উভয়ে উভয় প্রেম বদ্ধ
শরীরের ভূষণ চক্ষু, যাতে জগৎ হয় দৃষ্ট।
দাতার ভূষণ দান করে, বলে বাক্য মিষ্ট॥"

clapped, cheered, and encouraged to continue. The mob was delighted by the free display of his verbal resources, and the poet lost all sense of proportion under the encouragement he received.

He describes many incidents in Krisna's life. The Prabhasa scene, for instance, had been worked up to the tenderest pathos by earlier poets. Dasarathi, then, began by describing how a Brahmin, who was grovelling in abject poverty, went to Krisna owing to pressure from his wife to beg for alms, and came back disappointed. The story is told with much artistic effect, and we can understand how the audience would enjoy it. But the serious portion of Prabhasa scene must follow, and the thoughtful amongst the audience were sitting waiting for it. The poet, however, dragged the incidental story of the Brahmin beggar to such an inordinate length, that the whole time was taken up by it, and he began and ended his Prabhasa with this single incident introduced by way of diversion and originally meant to supplement the main subject. Dasarathi had no sense of proportion.

Without any sense of proportion.

In the atmosphere of the vulgar he lost all idea of time and place, and if he claims a place in literature, it is only by right of his sparkling and artistic language, which makes his shortcomings and scurrilities half-pardonable in our eyes. The art of writing and appreciating literature was no longer confined to the higher classes. The crowd also began to feel that Bengali literature was theirs. It was the season, as it were, for a flood-tide in our letters, and the evil was inevitably mingled with the pure to cover the whole range of the Bengali language.

The suggestive hits of a sharp wit, the majestic sweep of Sanskrit metres, the lofty spirit of self-sacrifice and higher ideals attracted the upper classes of society; but the coarser elements to suit the taste of the mob were inevitable, and thus the grotesque found place side by side with beauty, indecency with humour and the absurd with the natural. Dasarathi Rai was essentially a poet for the masses. In his poem on the Lily and

The Lily and the Bee.

the Bee, the bee, as the lover, being angry with the lily, declares himself an ascetic, and betakes himself to the forest,*—"the lover of the lily, like the sage Sukadeva, went in pensive mood, and gave heed to no one calling him." This poem is an inexhaustible fund of jest and wit, though towards the end it grows extremely vulgar.

But I am afraid I have not done justice to Dasarathi by calling him a poet for the masses only. Curiously enough, he is the author of many songs which breathe lofty religious sentiment and may almost be placed side by side with those of Rama Prasad and other saintly poets; with his perverse life, his vulgarities and his conceited style of writing, this element was certainly most inconsistent; yet he was a man capable of pious sentiment and devotional feeling; and whatever may have been his ways and manners, there was an undercurrent of faith in him which comes unmistakably to light in his religious songs. The song beginning with,—

His religious songs.

†"None is accountable, O Mother, for my sins.

With my own hands I dug a tank, and in it I have drowned myself."

—glistens as it were with the tears of true remorse of a penitent soul. I quote below another song.

‡"Find out a means, O divine Mother, for this humble soul, that it may finally rest at thy feet.

"Mayst thou grant me this boon, that at my death, the five elements, that constitute this mortal frame, may join the five places favoured by thee.

* "চলিলেন পদ্মিনী স্বামী যেন শুকদেব গোস্বামী
ডাকিলোকথা ক'ন না কারো সনে।"

† "দোষ কারু নয় গো মা
আমি স্বখাত সলিলে ডুবে মরি শ্যামা।"

‡ "দুর্গে, কর মা এ দীনের উপায়, যেন পায়ে স্থান পায়।
আমার এ দেহ পঞ্চত্বকালে, তব প্রিয় পঞ্চস্থলে,
আমার পঞ্চভূত যেন মিশায়।

"May the etherial portions of my body fill the space of thy holy temple, and the clay of this clay-vessel form a part of thy sacred image as made by the potters.

"May my breath mix with the air of the fans with which the priests fan thy image.

"May my fire be mingled with the sacrificial fire kindled for thee, and the watery portion of my body be joined to the water with which the feet of thine image are washed.

"By thus being resolved and thus dedicated, O Mother, may I never come back to this world to be born and to die."

Another song that he is said to have composed on the eve of his death may be taken as a sort of last will and testament. He addresses his brother Tinkori, familiarly called Tinu, in the song :

The last song.

"Go back, all of you, and yourself also, dear brother Tinu.

"I came alone and alone must I go.

"It is not in my power to return home with you, nor have I any wish to do so.

"I bequeath to you all my property—my house, my lands, and garden-house and all the effects that I possess. You are now their sole proprietor.

"Use this inheritance with discretion and wisdom : and be pleased, O brother, to look after my poor widow and maintain her.

শ্রীমন্দিরে অন্তর আকাশ যেন যায়
এ মৃত্তিকা যায় যেন তৎপ্রতিমায়, মা মোর পবন যেন চামর
ব্যজনে যায়, হোমাগ্নিতে মমাগ্নি যেন মিশায়।
আমার জল যেন যায় পাদ্যজলে, যেন ভবে যায়, বিমলে,
দাশরথির জীবন মরণ দায়।"

* তোরা ফিরে যা ভাই তিনু রে,
আমি যাব না, যেতে পারব না,
ভবে এসেছি একা, আমার একা যেতে হবে রে।
আমার যত কিছু টাকা কড়ি,
ঘর দরজা, বাগান বাড়ী,
সকল ধনের অধিকারী, তিনকড়ি ভাই তুমি রে

"You seem to think that I am alone and helpless. But I have no need of pity at this moment. I am serene and happy in the arms of my divine Mother."

Dasarathi's works. I give below a list of Dasarathi's works :—

1. Janmastami of Sri Krisna.
2. Nandotsava.
3. Sri Krisner Gosthalila.
4. Sri Radhikar Darpachurna.
5. Vastra-haran.
6. Nava-narikunjar.
7. Kalanka-bhanjan.
8. Mana-bhanjan.
9. Akrura Samvad.
10. Mathura.
11. Duti-samvad.
12. Nanda Vidaya.
13. Uddhava Samvad.
14. Rukmini-haran.
15. Satyabhamar Vrata.
16. Satyabhamar Darpachurna.
17. Sudarsana Chakra and Garuder Darpachurna.
18. Draupadir Vastra-haran.
19. Durvasar Parana.
20. Sri Rama Chandrer Vivaha.
21. Ramer Vana-gaman o Sita-haran.
22. Sita Anvesan.
23. Tarini Sen Vadha.
24. Laksmaner Saktisela.

হয়ে বিচক্ষণ, ক'রো রে রক্ষণ,
ঘরে র'ল বিধবা রমণী, তারে অন্ন দিওরে।
তোমরা সবে ভাব একা,
আমি কিন্তু নইরে একা,
বসে আছি আমি মায়ের কোলেরে।"

25. Ravana-vadha.
26. Rama Chandrer Desagaman.
27. Lava Kuser Yuddha.
28. Daksa Yajna.
29. Bhagavati evam Gangar Kondal.
30. Siva Vivaha.
31. Agamani.
32. Kasi Khanda.
33. Bhagiratha Kartrik Ganga Anayan.
34. Markander Chandi.
35. Mahisasurer Yuddha.
36. Kamale-Kamini.
37. Vamana Bhiksa.
38. Prahlada Charita.
39. Sakta-O-Vaisnaver Dvandva.
40. Vasante Viraha Varnana.
41. Viraha.
42. Kali Rajar Upakhyan-O-Chari-yiar.
43. Nabin Chand-O-Sonamani.
44. Stri Puruser Dvandva.
45. Nalini Bhramarokti.
46. Benger Viraha.
47. Miscellaneous songs.
48. Panchalir Vyakhya.

In an exhaustive compilation of Dasarathi's works lately published by the Vangabasi Office, Calcutta, we altogether counted 50,000 lines.

Rama Nidhi Gupta.

Rama Nidhi Gupta, popularly known as Nidhu Babu, was born at Chanpta in the year 1738. His father was a physician, and earned small pittance by his profession. At the birth of the poet, the family had removed from Chanpta to Kumartuli and settled there. Rama Nidhi received a sound education in Persian and Bengali, and acquired, besides, a smattering of English. His father placed him under the care

His family history. His life and songs.

of a European missionary, but the boy paid only little attention to the English language which his parents wanted him to learn, and devoted his whole time to the cultivation of Indian music. Being possessed of a sweet voice he very soon attained fame as a singer and became musically highly accomplished. When twenty years of age, he obtained an appointment in the Collectorate at Chapra where he worked for few years. Music as a science was cultivated with great zeal in northern India during the decline of the Muslim power. The Muhammadan Chiefs and Nawabs lost their warlike qualities and became addicted to pleasures of all sorts, and highly favoured music. At Chapra Rama Nidhi came in contact with a well-known Muslim singer and under his instruction, coupled with his natural proclivities, soon acquired proficiency in Mussalman music. He came back to Bengal with a resolve to compose songs in Bengali after Sari Miah whose favourite tune—the *tappa* was very popular at the time in the North-Western Provinces.

Nidhu Babu saw that Bengali songs, the Vidya-Sundara alone excepted, had always hitherto related to religious matters. Our love songs had for their theme amours of Radha and Krisna and formed part of the theological literature of the Vaisnavas. Nidhu Babu introduced a novelty; in him the higher emotions of love stood on their own basis, requiring no justification by religious reference. Out of this conviction he sang, and his utterances have a directness and sincerity which make him unique amongst our song-writers. His style is not marked by any elaboration. The brief and clear expression of thought is always his object,—never the laboured or fantastic conceits of language.

His *tappas*, as his songs are generally called, after the scale adopted by him, have human love for their subject, and the high spirit of idealism which breathes through them, coupled with the charms of a novel melody, elicited the appreciation of the educated community of Bengal. His verses were never popular in the sense in which those of Rama Prasad and Dasarathi had been so. The latter commanded appreciation amongst all sections of Bengali

society, but Nidhu Babu's *tappas* were mainly admired by the higher classes, who knew something of music as a science and had the culture to enter into the spirit of his exceedingly refined ideas, expressed as these were with laconic brevity. The masses still had the notion that no song was worth hearing which did not bear some explicit reference to religion in it. In a collection of songs published in 1905 by Babu Durga Das Lahiri the number of Nidhu Babu's songs inserted is 472, and this does not indicate one-tenth of the number composed by him. They are generally brief,—ordinarily taking not more than eight lines, while there are many that have four lines only. But however short they may be, one is sure to find a complete idea in each of his songs. A lively emotion or a fine thought is put into charming language and they are as suggestive as they are brief. They remind us of the short and sweet love-lyrics of Robert Burns.

Nidhu Babu never says any thing vulgar. He has always an elevated notion of love and gives us only the highest forms of tender sentiment. I here quote a few examples :—

(1)

* " I love you, not that you may love me in return !

" It has become my very nature to love you and you alone.

" I long for a sight of the smile on your lips, and for that I come here every day.

" O do not mistake me, dear ! I come to see you, not that you may see me ! "

(2)

† " How I shall tell her how deeply I love her?

" On seeing her I feel a gladness that words cannot describe.

(১)

* "ভাল বাসিবে বলে, ভালবাসিনে।
আমার স্বভাব এই, তোমা বই আর জানিনে।
বিধুমুখে মধুর হাসি, দেখ্‌তে বড় ভালবাসি,
তাই দেখে যেতে আসি, দেখা দিতে আসিনে॥"

(২)

† "কত ভালবাসি তারে, সই, কেমনে বুঝাব,
দরশনে পুলকিত মম অঙ্গ সব।

" When she is not present, my eyes fill in tears, and when she comes I feel like one who has found a precious jewel, and knows not where to hide it."

(3)

* " How am I to forget her?

" Have I not offered my soul to her, knowing her for my own?

" How can I forget that image which with love's brush I painted on my heart with the utmost care?

" They tell me ' she has forgotten you; why do you not then forget her? '

" I shall forget her only when death destroys my memory."

(4)

† " Even before my death, my heart is set aflame.

" May this anguish that burns me, leave her untouched.

" In my heart I have built a funeral fire, and my grief supplies the fuel.

" I am being consumed in the fire of my love. But may she rest in peace! "

যতক্ষণ নাহি দেখি, রোদন করয়ে আঁখি,
দেখিলে কি নিধি পাই কোথায় রাখিব ॥"

(৩)

* "তারে ভুলিব কেমনে,
প্রাণ সঁপিয়াছি যারে আপন জেনে।
আর কি সে রূপ ভুলি, প্রেমতুলি করে তুলি,
হৃদয়ে রেখেছি লিখে, অতি যতনে,
সবাই বলে আমারে, সে ভুলেছে ভুল তারে,
সেদিন ভুলিব তারে, যে দিন লবে শমনে ॥"

(৪)

† "না হতে পতন তনু, দহন হইল আগে।
আমার এ অনুতাপ তারে যেন নাহি লাগে।
চিতে চিতা সাজাইয়ে, তাহে দুখ তৃণ দিয়ে,
আপনি হতেছি দগ্ধ, আপনারি অনুরাগে ॥"

(5)

* " When she is absent I plan to be angry with her; but when again I look upon her face, I forget myself.

" Those eyes, that had resolved to turn away from her, surrender themselves, so soon as she approaches losing all self-control."

(6)

† " Oh why is there this yearning in my heart to see him?

" If I miss him for a moment, tears come to my eyes.

" The tongue of slander pursues me, and I glory in it.

" This evil repute seems to me like an ornament.

" My very life is leaving me for love. But he alas, cares nothing for me! His conduct is indescribable. Why do I love him? You ask me. I myself know not why! "

(7)

‡ " How happy I should be, if only my beloved would love me in return!

(৫)

* "সাধিলে করিব মান কত মনে করি,
দেখিলে তাহার মুখ তখনি পাসরি।
অভিমানে কহে আঁখি, আর না হইব সুখী,
দরশনে হন পুনঃ অধীন তাহারি॥"

(৬)

† "তারে দেখিতে এত সাধ কেন
তিলেক না হেরি যদি সজল নয়ন।
আভরণ করিয়াছি লোকের গঞ্জনা,
তাহার কারণে মরি, সে নহে আপনা।
তাহার রীতের কথা অকথ্য কথন
তবে যে ভুলেছে মন, জানি না কি গুণে॥"

(৭)

‡ "তবে প্রেমে কি সুখ হ'ত,
আমি যারে ভালবাসি সে যদি ভালবাসিত।

"The scentless *kinsuka* flower would then become sweet-scented.

"The thorny *ketaki* would grow without thorns.

"The sandal tree would have flowers, and the sugar-cane would bear fruits."

But how can I convey the impression made on the mind by these *tappas* when they are sung? It appears as if a voice were heard out of the regions of blessedness where self is completely immersed in love.

Nidhu Babu married a girl wife in the village of Sukhachar when he was only twenty. A son was born to the pair in 1765. The child died, when only three years old, and his mother survived him only a few months. Soon after the death of this wife Nidhu Babu married again. His new bride was a resident of Jorasanko in Calcutta. But she also died a few months after her marriage in 1768. Nidhu Babu was only thirty years old at the time; but he could by no means be persuaded to marry again. Twenty years passed from this time, and in the year 1788 the widower was compelled by friendly intervention to take a third wife from the village Varijahati in the district of Howrah. He became the father of four sons and two daughters by this marriage. He died in 1825 at the age of 87.

Died in 1825.

Dasarathi was pre-eminently a poet of the masses. Rama Nidhi's love songs were appreciated and sung by that section of the community which delighted in higher music and in the literature of refined sentiment. Iswar Chandra Gupta was the idol of the educated Bengali Hindus of his period. He was a great figure,—in fact the most remarkable literary personality of his age. It was his encouragement that inspired Bankim Chandra, Rangalal,

Iswar Gupta.

কিংশুক শোভিত ভাগে, কেতকী কণ্টক বিনে,
ফুল হত চন্দনে, ইক্ষুতে ফল ফলিত।"

Dinabandhu and other young aspirants to literary fame who all served their first apprenticeship in Bengali by writing in the monthly *Prabhakar* edited by Iswar Chandra.

His life.

Curiously enough, this writer was no scholar, though his voice was so authoritative in the Bengali literature of his time. In his early years he neglected his studies, and was given up for a lost child.

Iswar Chandra was born in 1811 at Kanchrapara in the district of Twenty-four Parganas. His father Hari Mohan Gupta was not a man of means; he earned the small pittance of Rs. 8 a month as clerk in an indigo factory at Selidaha; but he had some small landed property in his native village, and the family was mainly dependent upon this.

Iswar Chandra showed courage, so early as five years of age. One night the lad was passing through a place supposed to be haunted by ghosts; it was a dark night, and a tall man, passing by, tumbled over him. The child was not daunted by what others of his age would certainly have taken for a ghost, but he boldly stood up and asked 'Who are you, my man?' When he was ten years old, his mother died. His father lost no time in taking a second wife. The step-mother was introduced to young Iswar Chandra, who threw a brick at her by way of first greeting, expressing his great indignation at the conduct of his father. His uncle was so angry at this behaviour that he gave him a sound thrashing with his shoes. Young Iswar sulkily bore the punishment and shutting himself up in a small room, did not come out for the whole day.

His father Hari Mohan Gupta not only gave him a step-mother whom he did not like, but married him, when only fifteen, to Durgamani Devi, an ugly idiotic girl who stammered in her speech. The reason for his father's favouring this girl was that her pedigree was noble,—a point which at one time carried high favour with Hindu fathers.

Married to an ugly girl.

Iswar Chandra's career in school soon came to a close, and he became notorious for his negligence in his studies and for his rowdyisms. All gave him up for lost, and he had no better opinion of himself.

A lost child and a soreness of heart.

He was unfortunate in life,—in his early years as a motherless child, and in manhood as the husband of a wife who was no companion, but rather a troublesome burden, always keeping afresh a disappointment than which in youth nothing can be greater.

The result is the soreness of heart and spirit of satire which characterise his poems. He became a misanthrope and took revenge upon the world by jeering unsparingly at all classes of people. He found no happiness in the nuptial tie, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, his distinguished biographer, writes of him :—

*"He was lacking in that education of soul which the company of women gives to a man; he lacked in the edifying influence which admiration and love for the softer sex causes in youthful minds. Womankind was the subject of his constant abuse."

But we shall deal with the merits of his literary composition in their proper place.

A born poet.

It is said that when only three years old, he composed a couplet, to the great admiration of his relations, describing the sort of life he was leading in Calcutta.

† "Mosquitoes by night and flies by day.
This is Calcutta life, say what you may!"

* "যে শিক্ষা স্ত্রীলোকের নিকট পাইতে হয়, তাহা তাঁহার হয় নাই; যে উন্নতি স্ত্রীলোকের সংসর্গে হয়, স্ত্রীলোকের প্রতি স্নেহ ভক্তি থাকিলে হয়, তাহা তাঁহার হয় নাই। স্ত্রীলোক তাঁহার কাছে কেবল ব্যঙ্গের পাত্র।"

The memories of Iswar Chandra Gupta by *Bankim Chandra Chatterjee*

† "রেতে মশা দিনে মাছি
এই নিয়ে, ভাই, কলকাতায় আছি।"

Though his education was practicaliy *nil*, yet on one occasion as his companions were reading poems in Persian, he sat quietly by and listened with attention to their contents, when explained in Bengali. He retired and soon came back with some sparkling verses in Bengali embodying the spirit of the Persian poems, which highly pleased his companions who took him to be a young prodigy. This poetical trait developed so remarkably in him, that when he was only 11 years old, he could compose songs that were accepted with compliments by professional musicians who put the lad to constant tasks in poetical composition, which it was the joy and pride of young Iswar Chandra to execute to the best of his ability.

But an illiterate man by sheer dint of inborn genius could not be expected to attain more than a rustic fame and the applause of his personal friends. An opportunity, however, soon presented itself which paved the path to his receiving some education and bringing his remarkable talents to the notice of the enlightened public. His maternal uncles lived at Jorasanko, where the Tagore family were at the time, as now, pioneers in education and in all progressive movements in Bengal. Iswar Chandra's singular poetic powers attracted the attention of Babu Jogendra Mohan Tagore, and the poet became a friend and companion of that enlightened nobleman. He received a good education here, and conjointly with his noble friend and patron started the weekly *Samvad Probhakar* in March, 1830. This journal soon reached the highest popularity in Bengal, and Iswar Chandra's genius supplied the public, through its columns, with an unceasing fountain of satirical and serio-comic pieces in prose and poetry for many years. It was in this journal that the juvenile writings of some of the greatest writers of Bengal such as Bankim Chandra and Dinabandhu Mitra were accorded a place by him, for he was never slow in appreciating talent in young writers and in giving them the encouragement they deserved. Iswar Chandra's noble friend and patron died in the year 1832. Disheartened by this

Receives education.

Starts a weekly.

blow of fortune, the poet stopped *Prabhakar* for some time, but it re-appeared as a bi-weekly in 1836, and in 1839 he made it a daily paper. Besides the *Prabhakar*, he edited the *Samvad Ratnavali* which was started in 1849. He translated the Bhagavata into Bengali verse and also the *Prabodha Chandrodaya Nataka* which he called *Bodhendu Vikasa* in Bengali. He was a voluminous versifier; it is said that he composed more than 50,000 couplets. Iswar Chandra died in February, 1858.

Thus the wayward lad and spoilt child lived to wield great influence in the literary atmosphere of Bengal, immediately before it became charged with European influence. He was pre-eminently a poet of the old school, and with him died the last echoes of the age of Bharat Chandra and Jaya Narayan Sen. Satire was his *forte* and bright wit sparkles in his lines directed against what was false and artificial in society. At home he was a genial friend and his company was sought for by the wealthy and talented alike. He kept no accounts and could have amassed a fortune, had he desired to do so. His income from the *Prabhakar* was great; and besides, he was endowed with monthly pensions and honorariums from many rich men in Bengal; he spent money heedless of the morrow, and was always ready to help the needy. No friend was refused a loan when he wanted it and many did not repay, but the poet never asked his money back. In the sketch that Bankim Chandra draws of him we find it mentioned that Iswar Chandra distributed prizes and rewards amongst young men who showed skill in literary composition, and young Bankim Chandra who was destined at a subsequent time to win far greater laurels than his patron, was also the recipient of prizes from him.

His character.

So lived and died Iswar Chandra,—one of the most remarkable men of his time in Bengal. He was a born satirist and a born poet. He adorned whatever he touched with his brilliant wit. When he would vilify a rival, his style would sink into

the grossest and most atrocious obscenities. This had grown to be the fashion amongst the literary men of this time. Iswar Chandra's scathing attacks on his rival Gauri Sankar Bhattacharyya, commonly known as Gurgure Bhattacharyya, in the *Samvad Prabhakar*, and the latter's charges in answer publised in his journal the *Rasaraj*, form a literature of the worst type that ever saw light: and Mr. Lang, the popular Christian missionary, whose name is inseparably connected with the indigo disturbances, felt the necessity of moving the authorities to enact a law against obscene writings, owing to these perverse and scurrilous publications.

Vulgar satires.

Yet, in spite of such writings Iswar Chandra often disclosed in his poems a highly religious turn of mind. He was not great enough to introduce innovation in taste and free himself from the vices of the age. In the collection of his poems by Babu Manindra Chandra Gupta, we find no less than 70 pieces devoted to religious subjects, and all of them bear evidences of their writer's spirituality and faith.

We give below some specimens of his writing :—

Specimens of his writings.

(*a*) From the poem "Festivity in the month of Pausa."

* "The young wife has scarcely time to braid her dishevelled hair. If per chance she spoils a curry, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law are furious with her. They say, 'What hast thou done? It takes one's breath away to see the extent of your folly. Your mother could not teach you anything better than this? If we went without food for years, still we would not touch this curry.' The beautiful face

The young wife.

* "সাবকাশ নাই মাত্র এলোচুল বাঁধে।
ভাল ঝোল মাছ ভাত রাশি রাশি ব'াধে।
কত থাকে তার কাঁচা, কত তার পুড়ে।
সাধে ব'াধে পরমান্ন নলেনের গুড়ে॥
বধূর বন্ধনে যদি যায় তাহা এঁকে।
শাশুড়ী ননদ কন কত কথা বেঁকে॥

of the young wife, sweet and lovely as a full-blown lotus, is drowned in tears; her sorrows she can not express, and she bears those rebukes though her heart is bursting with grief."

This is a true picture of young wife; peculiarly placed as she is in Hindu society, she must suffer all the ills of life patiently without a word, till she grows to be herself the mother of children, and has a chance to maltreat some other young wife placed in her charge, by way of retaliation.

(b) On the Widow Marriage Act, which had been passed, it will be remembered, in the teeth of the opposition of the orthodox community:

[It should be borne in mind that Hindu widows are not allowed to wear shell-bracelets nor allowed to take fish or meat of any kind.]

Widow-marriage.

*"All are saying, let not the reformers, determined as they are to save the young widows, take up the case of elderly matrons—our wrinkled-faced grey-haired grandams. Who so bold as to dare approach them with an offer of shell-bracelets and fish?"

(c) The first kiss of love:

The first kiss.

†"A fount of the utmost happiness, that a lover's heart can wish for, is in the first kiss of love.

হ্যালো বউ কি করিলি দেখে মন চটে।
এই রান্না শিখেছিস মায়ের নিকটে॥
বধূর মধুর খনি মুখ শতদল।
সলিলে ভাসিয়া যায় চক্ষু ছল ছল।
আহা তাঁর হাহাকার বুঝিবার নয়।
ফুটিতে না পারে কিছু মনে মনে রয়॥"

* "সওলেই এইরূপ বলাবলি করে।
ছুড়ির কল্যাণে যেন বুড়ি নাহি তরে॥
শরীর পড়েছে ঝুলে, চুল গুলি পাকা।
কে ধরাবে মাছ তারে, কে পরাবে শাঁখা?"

† "প্রণয় সুখের সার, প্রথম চুম্বন।
অপার আনন্দপ্রদ, প্রেমিকের ধন॥

"We hear of the nectar in India's heaven for which the very angels are suppliants, a drop of which fills their minds with celestial joy,

"for which the demon Rahu periodically swallows the moon.

"But the nectar—sweet nectar, I do not covet in preference to this first kiss of love."

†"Or look at wine, the favourite drink of the Asuras, even a touch of whose cup fills the mind with pleasure,

"drunk with this, the Yadavas fought and died,

"wine that kept Balarama in a never ruffled cheerful mood —now become a familiar article with the civilised world;

"even that drink—wine, sweet wine,—I covet not in preference to this first kiss of love."

‡"Diamonds are found in the mines of Golkunda,—

"On the tops of the mount Sumeru are mines of gold and silver,—

আছে বটে অমৃত অমরাবতী পুরে।
প্রোমোদিত করে যাহে যত সব সুরে॥
উথলয়ে প্রেমসিন্ধু পানে এক বিন্দু।
যার আশে গ্রাসে রাহু পূর্ণিমার ইন্দু।
সে ক্ষুধার সুধা মাত্র নাহি এক ক্ষণ।
যদি পাই প্রণয়ের প্রথম চুম্বন॥"

† অসুরের সুধা প্রিয় পেয় সুরারস মাত্র।
রসনা সরস গাত্র পরশিলে পাত্র॥
যার লাগি হল ধ্বংস যদুবংশগণ।
স্বভাবে অভাব সদা রেবতী রমণ॥
অদ্যাবধি মদ্য মাত্র পানীয় প্রধান।
বিদ্বজ্জন খায় যাহে সভ্য বিদ্যমান॥
এমন মধুর সুরা নাহি চাহ মন।
যদি পাই প্রণয়ের প্রথম চুম্বন॥

‡ গলকুণ্ড দেশে আছে হীরার আকর।
রজত কাঞ্চনময় সুমেরু শেখর॥
নানা রত্ন পরিপূর্ণ রত্নাকর জলে।
গজমুক্তা মূল্যযুক্তা অনেক সিংহলে॥

"In the sea near Ceylon the pearls called Gajamukta are found in abundance,—

"If Kuvera the God of wealth were to come with all these and offer them to me.

"I would cast them all away for this my love's first kiss."

But Iswar Chandra will always be admired for the pains he took to collect biographical accounts of some of our early poets, as Bharat Chandra, Rama Prasad and some of the old *kaviwallas*. He travelled in various places of Bengal to unearth valuable materials, and regularly published in *Samvad Prabhakar*, the accounts which he gleaned by his patient research. Much of the information tha has come down to us about the lives of our great literary worthies is based upon these accounts.

Biographical sketches.

Iswar Chandra composed many songs for the Kavi parties. In them we find the same ready wit and the sound realistic pictures of domestic life in Bengal, given with that remarkable fidelity which characterises his other writings.

Kavi songs.

His poems are growing obsolete and the great popularity which they once enjoyed is now a thing of the past. The humour of our elders has lost much of the old flavour owing to the more fastidious taste that prevails now. Some of the witty sayings, once admired, appear to us puerile and it is to be feared, that 50 years hence, Iswar Chandra's poems will only be read by a few students of Bengali, who would desire to trace the history of its progress.

Growing out of date.

Iswar Chandra's style bears evident traces of Bharat Chandra's influence; and the influence of his own is stamped on the works of Hem Chandra who succeeded to his high place in

কুবের লইয়া যদি সেই সমুদয়।
আমারে প্রদান করে হইয়া সদয়।
ক্ষেপণ করিব দূরে প্রহারি চরণ।
যদি পাই প্রণয়ের প্রথম চুম্বন॥"

His influence on Hem Chandra.

Bengali poetry, a quarter of century after. Most of the social satires of Hem Chandra have a ring of Iswar Chandra's celebrated verses on 'our old Siva' as Mr. Marshman was humorously called by him.

Iswar chandra's prose is far from being happy. It is highly pedantic, and has even an element of grotesqueness in it.

The Folk-literature of Bengal

Bengal possesses a rich folk-literature, very little of which has yet been put into writing. The grand-mothers may be heard to tell these stories to their grand-children every evening in remote villages,—stories which have come down from a very early age. The Rev. Lal Behari Dey published some of these stories in English, but those gleaned by him from the resources available in towns represent only a very small fraction of such literature, and the most beautiful of these were not accessible to him, as, being a Christian, he could not have full command of the resources of the Hindu home.

Dakshina Babu's collections.

Lately Babu Dakshina Ranjan Mitra Majumdar has published two volumes of folk-tales in Bengali. He has attempted to reproduce them in the very language of the rustic women from whom he collected them. In some cases he recorded the stories by a phonograph at the time they were delivered; so that their language remains remarkably faithful to the narration of the villagers. The language owes not the least colouring or refinement to modern literary Bengali. The dialect spoken in the country five hundred years ago, of which specimens are to be found in the written literature of the period, remains unchanged in the colloquial language of our backward villages, not subjected to the influences of the outside world; and Dakshina Babu's collection has not only preserved the spirit of the old folk-lore unpolished by the touch of the compiler, but has retained even those old and quaint forms with all their mannerisms, which best indicate the genius of our tongue.

As specimens of old dialect.

There are altogether 16 stories in two volumes. Some of them are meant simply to amuse the children, which is the primary object of all nursery tales. There are others, like the stories of Malanchamala and Kanchanamala, which though sufficiently wild and romantic to amuse the young, have also deeper meanings to interest more thoughtful readers. The characters of the heroines of these stories possess a living interest. The ideals of chastity and devotion to the husband, which they hold up, open vistas as it were, into the domestic life of the Hindu women of past days, and enable us to see the workings of their souls—the purity of their hearts and the wonderful spirit of sacrifice which actuated them in their every-day conduct. The pathos created by Malanchamala's sufferings, her sacrifices, and devotion to her husband are matters difficult to be conveyed to those whose idea of wifehood is different from that which governs Hindu women. The Hindu wife in those days bore all kinds of ills from her husband with untiring patience; she lived with her co-wife, to whom often the husband was devoted and bore her neglect and his contempt in a surprising spirit of resignation; and in spite of all maltreatment cherished only the best feelings for her husband. All this was sometimes done with a grace,—a saintliness and devotion which place her sorrows above our pity. They may be looked upon almost in the light of martyrdom. The supernatural element prevails in the story of Malanchamala, with all imaginable excesses of wild fancy, and this constitutes its interest for the young; but as we proceed, the griefs of the heroine becomes the all-absorbing subject of the readers. Her woes claim a tear at every page. She like Behula restores her husband to life; she saves him from the flames of the funeral pyre; follows him like a shadow; and, all unseen by him, ministers to his every comforts. She was married to him when he was a mere child. The child grows up, but Malanchamala does not show herself to him till he becomes a handsome youngman and has married a princess. Many years of fasts, and

Malanchamala.

Her great love.

vigils, heart-rending anguish, and cruel treatment from her royal father-in-law, who does not allow her to live in his palace because she is of an inferior caste, are rewarded with this, that her husband marries the princess and lives in the palace of his new bride's father. And this husband had been the apple of her eye; in the funeral ground, in the deep shades of the wilderness she had saved him from death, undergoing unheard of hardships, and bringing to him all the ministering care of a guardian angel! The young wife looks through a window in the moonlight and sees her husband and his new bride happy together. Malanchamala—chaste, devoted and faithful to her husband, as fidelity itself, epeps through the lattices of the window, and sees her husband in the arms of the princess; it was like Enoch Arden peeping into the room of Philip and discovering Anne as his wife; but our Malanchamala is no earthly woman; she is heavenly in every sense of the word. She sings:—

"Live in happiness, O Prince, live in happiness, O Princess.

"If I am a chaste woman, my words will not be in vain.

"Let your ancestors in heaven, O Prince, watch the candles that light up this chamber and preserve you from all ill.

"May the children, that are born to your new wife, walk beneath royal umbrellas for fourteen generations to come!

"O forests, O trees, O land, O waters, keep guard! Let me know when they awake, that I may steal away unseen by either.

"Let the towers of the palace, where my husband reigns endure for ever.

"Let the sun and the moon be as guards of his city.

"May my royal father-in-law's palace and the throne of my husband be victorious for ever.

"And may the shell-bracelets of the Princess and her vermilion mark, the signs of her wifehood,—endure for ever.

"Grant me this boon, O God. I brought up my husband with great pain, and now what can I covet more than to see him happy with a princess?

"Though I die and am reduced to dust, I shall ever rejoice at this sight of the happiness of my husband.

"If I die now and am transformed into a bird or a lower animal, or whatever else may befall me, I care not, as I have seen my beloved happy."

This song is conched in the idioms of at least five centuries back.* The story has been worked into such life-like details, that the woman Malanchamala does not here pose as a great heroine. She does not seem to attempt at reaching any inaccessible height. Her woes give rise to great pathos, but with all these she continues to attract us, as an unassuming lovely village-girl that she is.

Our Bengali folklore shows how peculiarly situated a Hindu wife might be in the midst of environment and influences favourable to the development of a spirit of sacrifice, devotion and fidelity. Her growth was often as natural as that of a flower, and is quite faithfully portrayed in the old literature of the country, and even in this unassuming folklore, where nothing has been put forward for the sake of display. The story of Kanchanmala also shows the familiar ideal of the Hindu wife. Her husband neglects her, but she persists in her devotion. For selfish reasons her husband comes reluctantly at a certain crisis to obtain her permission for undertaking a sea-voyage, promising her, as a reward, a necklace of pearls, a fine pair of shell-bracelets and vermilion to adorn her forehead. But she answers, "You are my necklace of pearls; you are my shell-bracelets and vermilion mark; I do not want any other. Only take me with you my husband, I shall be at your bidding and be happy." These stories are interspersed with songs in language which is generally very antiquated. Many facts about old Hindu society and about the sea-voyages undertaken by the merchants of Bengal are to be found in these stories; and there are other elements which indicate Buddhistic influences, such as instances of

Kanchanamala

* *Thakur Dadar Jhuli* by Daksina Ranjan Mitra Majumdar, p. 195.

the wonderful powers of *Siddhas*, and descriptions of *Tantrik* rites. There are some stories on which Muhammadan influence has evidently left its impress, as for instance in the story of Madhumala, the introduction of fairies is certainly no creation of the Hindu fancy.

Buddhistci and Muslim influences

The songs in which those stories abound are sung to the favourite village metre known as *Bhatial Sura*. This rhythm and cadence is peculiarly distinctive of Bengal; it has nothing to do with the refined melodies of Sanskrit or Persian music. There are six *Ragas* and thirty six *Raginis*—42 chief scales or musical modes of the Hindus; but the *Bhatial Sura* is not included in the range of this higher musical system. *Bhatial* is the cadence of the rustics, and its plaintive and appealing notes, so unassuming and simple, go straight to the heart and create their own pathos, without possessing any of those niceties of sound which characterise the *Ragas* and the *Raginis*. The power of the *Bhatial* to strike the tender cords of the human soul, was found out by the Vaisnavas who refined and enriched it with modulations, and made from it that soul-captivating air—the *Manohar Sai*. The writers of religious songs adopted it with peculiar modifications to form the *Baul Sura* which produces emotions peculiar to an ascetic mood.

The following note is added to this chapter as much new material has recently come to light.

Historical legends and Folk-lore

The folk-literature of Bengal has a historical background which I am going to outline here. The Eastern Mymensingh and some other districts of East Bengal were at one time included in the empire of the Gupta kings. But during the reign of the Pala kings the Rajas of Pragjyotispur (Assam) practically asserted their independence, acknowledging nominally the sovereignty of the Palas. But latterly when the Senas ruled Bengal and the power of Pragjyotispur decayed, the whole of this hilly country, run over by the Kangsha, Dhenu, and Bhairab, and guarded by

the sloping Himalayan Valleys became divided into several small states ruled by the Hajangs, the Chakmas, the Rajbangshis, and other tribes, generally known as Kirats. The Sena kings tried to enter these recesses of the mountainous districts and establish their power there. In the winter the royal forces defeated the armies of the chiefs and were busy making arrangements to include this country within their jurisdiction, but when the rains came the imperial forces, unacquainted with the mountainous path and subjected to flood and other freaks of nature, could not cope with these hilly people, who like squirrels scaled the heights of the mountainous region and moved about in the depths of the rivers and swamps with ease. The army of the Sena rajas were reduced in such weather to a deplorable condition for want of food, and cut off from their camps, they were dispersed. Thus the chiefs became once more the lords of the region. The object of the Sena kings in making these inroads was not merely to extend their kingdom. Ballala Sena had inaugurated large social movements which displeased many influential men of his court. A considerable number fled to these Garo countries which afforded shelter to the fugitives. Ballala Sena tried to destroy these hiding places of the noblemen of his court, but owing to natural barriers, especially during the rains, his repeated attacks failed to make any permanent impression there. For details of these events I refer the reader to the historical treatises on Mymensingh by late Babu Kedarnath Mazumdar.

It should be stated here that the Sena kings were great patrons and exponents of Brahmanical Renascence. In those countries, where they ruled, the *Kanojia* Brahmins had absolute sway. Social order was completely changed there, and the Brahmins were regarded as gods claiming the homage of all other castes. Caste-distinction was introduced with severe stringency and some of the lower castes were treated with the utmost contempt. The people of these hilly countries had a Hindu culture of a different type which went back to the time of the Guptas. The conventions of the Gupta age continued to have a hold upon these people who were

of a mixed race having in their culture the primitive elements of hillmen, of the Tibeto-Burmans and of the people of the soil who had accepted the Aryan civilization. They professed the modified Saiva religion, mixed with the Sakta cult of the Tantrics, and were governed by the tastes and characteristics of the Gupta age. They did not believe in the injunctions of the Kanojia Brahmins, condemning the vernacular language, and in their claims to absolute superiority which were accepted with a ready obedience by the redistributed caste of the Renascence period. In Bengal sea-voyage was not prohibited till the 16th century and infant marriage was unknown. The women had often a voice in their marriages. So that on many points their mode of life was different from that of the changed social order of Bengal. "Chakravarty" and "Acharyya" were the general denominations of the high-class Brahmins. 'Banerjees', 'Chatterjees', 'Mukherjees' amongst the Brahmins, and 'Ghoses', 'Boses', 'Guhas', 'Mitras' amongst the Kayasthas had not yet monopolised the highest places in society. The Dattas were regarded as *Kulins* amongst the Kayasthas.

The chiefs, as I have already said, had not submitted to the Sena kings. They preserved their independence and culture till the Muhammadans came and assumed the reins of government in their hands. Jangalbari was seized and taken from the hands of Ram Hazra and Laksman Hazra, two Garo Chiefs —by Isha Khan in the year 1575. Susang Durgapur was occupied by an upcountry man named Someswar Singh, and the Garo rule thus disappeared. The chiefs of Susang Durgapur upheld their independence till the time of Jahangir. Majlis Kutub, a general of Feroz Tughluk, occupied the kingdom of Sherpur and adjacent locality, driving away Dilip Singh—a Garo Chief. Thus outside the control of the Brahmins who reorganised the Hindu society of Bengal proper, this vast country bordering the Assam hills and the banks of the Brahmaputra, the culture of the Hindu people showed a different type from that of the Brahmanic Renascence. We shall presently indicate the

characteristics of the excellent ballads and songs recovered generally from Mymensingh and Chittagong; but before we proceed to do so we should refer our readers to the current legends about some of these ballads.

We find in the Raghuvansa by Kalidasa that Raja Raghu of the Solar dynasty was greeted with songs in his capital and in the rural countries of his kingdom. In historical times king Dharma Pala (8th century) was entertained with popular songs in his honour—a fact mentioned in the Khalimpur inscription. It is said there that the merchants and the rural people used to sing them at their leisure hours and even the shepherds committed them to memory and sang them in chorus in their pastoral fields; the women of the royal palace sang them and taught the birds to repeat them, filling the air with their warbling tones. In the Bangarh inscriptions of Mahi Pala (10th century) mention is made of popular songs in praise of king Rajya Pala. We find in the book "Sekh Subhoday", ascribed to Halayudha the Court-Pandit of Laksmana Sen, that ballads were composed by people in honour of the saintly king Rama Pala (11th century). The "Chaitanya Bhagavata," a standard biography of the Vaisnavas of the 16th century, says that people of this country before the advent of Chaitanya used enthusiastically to sing the songs of some of the Pala kings such as Yogi Pala, Mahi Pala and Bhogi Pala (*Antya Khanda*). Scraps of Mahipala-songs have been recovered and published in my "Eastern Bengal Ballads" and it is definitely known that in Northern Bengal, ballads on Mahi Pala of considerable dimensions are still sung. But no systematic efforts have yet been made to recover them. We have already referred in this book to the songs of Gopichandra at some length. In the frontier states of North Bengal evidences of ballads of this nature still exist among the populace in many places. Dhanya Manikya, the greatest king of Tippera in the historical times, was honoured by his people with eulogistic songs attended with dance. Musicians were brought from Trihut (Darbhanga) in the 16th Century to teach the people of Tippera to

sing the songs, coupled with dance, with accuracy and effect. Raja Dhanya Manikya's queen, Kamala Devi, was also the subject of many songs of which we find mention in the standard historical work, the "Rajamala."

During the reign of the Sena kings, the sincere and ardent expressions of loyalty ceased to stir the people of their kingdom, as the Bengali language went out of favour in their courts. There are many evidences to suggest that the admirers of the Sena kings were limited to high and aristrocratic circles, created by them. It is also likely that the rigorous treatment of the lower classes in the redistribution of castes estranged their feelings and drove large masses of people in Eastern Bengal to embrace Islam. But when the whole country was conquered by Muslim arms, the custom of ballad singing which is as old as the Indo-Aryan civilisation, was renewed and we find many ballads and poetical references in honour of Isha Khan, Feroz Khan, Alal, Dulal, Paragal Khan, Chati Khan and other Muslim chiefs.

The blank we find in the ballad literature marking the period of the Senas, notwithstanding their martial achievements, is significant. The country passed into the hands of an alien people and there were undoubtedly many tragic episodes in connection with this revolution, worthy of being commemorated in ballad poetry. But curiously, there is an entire dearth of popular expression of love and sympathy for the Hindu kings. A few Sanskrit books, written by Brahmin scholars, occasionally bear evidences of refractory spirit on the part of the people. The "Ballala Charita," whether it has any high historical value or not, describes the quarrel of Ballala with the powerful Subarna Baniks of Bengal.

The legends, contained in the popular songs, are not of much value as historical records. There is no doubt that they give some material for forming an idea of our social evolution. But the grain is to be thrashed out of the chaff, and a comparative study of the evidences of inscriptions and trustworthy records with the help of

these ballads might possibly solve some of the intricate historical problems of Bengal.

The poetical merits of these historical legends are not generally of a high order. The more ancient of these, like the "Nibelungen", or Robinhood tales are suggestive of some facts of true narrative, but they should not be accepted as conclusive until substantiated by other evidences. The legendary portions, no doubt, were meant to please popular imagination. They are suggestive of sincere conviction and a deep sense of wrong, and an appreciation of just and kind treatment, and generally speaking though their description of the minutiæ of events is not correct, the estimate they give of the character of the ruler and of those of popular heroes are, generally speaking, sound and correct.

The rich and really beautiful ballads, which have attracted the attention of western scholars, are a discovery of quite recent times and they first came to light in 1913 after the publication of my History of Bengali Language and Literature in 1911, so that no notices of them could be taken in the first edition of this book.

In 1913-14 my attention was drawn to some passages quoted from an old ballad in the journal 'Saurabh' published from Mymensingh. This ballad was called Kenaram after its hero.

The few passages, quoted in the article written by Babu Chandrakumar De, were to me full of a message from a new world and seemed to contain features of a completely different model from what we possessed in the classical Bengali poems.

I wrote to the editor of the 'Saurabh', enquiring about Babu Chandrakumar De, who, I came to learn was, a very poor man, and though possessing some poetic talents, knew barely to read and write Bengali without any pretension to scholarship. At the time of my enquiry he was suffering from a disorder of brain and was incapable of doing any serious work. In spite of his ardent love for these ballads he was full of hesitancy to collect them, as they were composed in halting rhymes, and, were full of provincialisms, which Chandrakumar feared, would not appeal to

the literary tastes of the educated people. He was willing to try to recover the classical poems of Manasa Devi and Krisna Mangal which were plentiful in the district of Mymensingh. But I insisted on his collecting the rural ballads and helped him in getting a job as a ballad collector in the Calcutta University. I was surprised by the beauty and charm of the ballads that he collected with great labour in spite of his bad health. Other workers came in, such as Ashutosh Chaudhuri, Beharilal Chakravarty and a few others whom I trained to do this work and whom the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee employed as Ballad-collectors to co-operate with Chandrakumar. With the pecuniary help graciously lent by Lord Lytton, the then Governor of Bengal, aided by the enthusiastic support of Sir Asutosh, the University of Calcutta brought out only eight volumes of these ballads, edited and compiled by me with the help of my colleagues. The first four contained the original texts and the rest their English translations. I added footnotes and elaborate prefaces to these volumes. They are embodied in more than 35,00 pages of royal octavo size, and an appreciative foreward to the first volume was written by Lord Ronaldshay (now Marquess of Zetland), then Governor of Bengal. The subjects of the ballads are enumerated below :

1. Mahua, 2. Malua, 3. Chandravati, 4. Kamala, 5. Dewan Bhabna, 6. Kenaram, 7. Rupavati, 8. Kanka and Lila, 9. Kajalrekha, 10. Dewan Madina, 11. The Washer maiden, 12. The Herdsman Lover, 13. Kanchanmala, 14. Santi, 15. Rani Kamala, 16. Bhelua, 17. The Adventurous career of a young dacoit, 18. The Santhal Insurrection, 19. Nizam Dacoit, 20. Isha Khan Masnad Ali, 21. Surat Jamal and Adhua, 22. Feroz Khan Dewan, 23. Manjurma, 24. The Coffin-stealer, 25. Bhelua (different from 16 above), 26. Hati Kheda or capture of elephants, 27. Ayana Bibi, 28. Kamal the Merchant, 29. Shyam Ray, 30. Chaudhuri's Larai, 31. Gopini Kirtan, 32. The Lay of the Twelve Shrines, 33. Manipur Fight, 34. Raja Raghu, 35. Nuranneha and the Grave, 36. Sila Devi, 37. Mukut Roy, 38. Nasar Malum, 39. Bharai Raja, 40. Bagula

the Merchant's daughter, 41. The Blind Lover, 42. Ratan Thakur, 43. Sannamala, 44. Raja Birnarayan, 45. Chandravati's Ramayana, 46. Raja Mahipal, 47. Tilak Basanta, 48. Pir Batasi.

The reception, these publications of Calcutta University got from scholars, was unique. I got continual encouragement and appreciative help from the noble Marquess. My first critic Dr. Kramrisch, the gifted Professor of our University, said that in the whole range of Indian literature she did not come across a story like "Mahua."

William Rothenstein said that in these ballads the heroines looked like the female figures of Ajanta, Bagh, and Amaravati, restored to life with all the occasions of oriental colouring and grace. Dr. Sylvain Levi said that living as he did in a cold country of the west he enjoyed in the descriptions of the ballad the genial warmth and poetic atmosphere of tropical climate of Bengal. Distinguished scholars like Romain Rolland and Sir George Grierson poured forth eulogies which surpassed our highest expectations. The "Times Literary Supplement" wrote a long editorial on these ballads on the 7th August, 1924.

Though the legendary tales of the Rajas are not generally characterised by any high poetical merit, it will be wrong to say that these are dull and uninteresting. Some of them have fine passages of intrinsic merit and have exquisite poetical features. The ballads of Raja Raghu and Kamala contained respectively in the 4th and 1st volumes of the Ballads are redeemed by high lyrical poetry. These songs have clothed a real story of martyrdom in the garments of rich imagination in which love has played an important part. The description of the dawn and moonlit night, given here by the village poet, possesses the grandeur of primitive Vedic inspiration and the pathos of the scene of the wild search of the king for his queen and his struggle to win her back from the region of the dead is soul-stirring and intense.

The stories of 'Mahua,' 'Shyam Ray,' 'Andha Bandhu,' etc., show the characteristics and literary mannerisms of the age of

Chandi Das and may have been largely derived from sources attributable to the 14th century. An analysis of their poetic merits and references to the contemporary customs and practices will be found in the prefaces to these ballads. 'Mahua' is a strange creation of Indian poetry. The best women of Hindu literature of the classical age are generally conceived after the model of Sita and Savitri; but Mahua comprises in her character the ferocity of a tigress, the rapid activities and resourcefulness of a gypsy at play, the indomitable courage of a hero of hundred fights, and the quiet virtues of domestic life and control over her passions,—these characterise a highbred Brahmin girl that she was,—her life showing the conflicting elements of a very complex character. The impelling force of all her action is love, but her character is unique in Hindu literature. Completely free from conventions and orthodoxy, she is one of the best and loveliest characters ever conceived by a poet. In the ballad of 'Malua' we find an unsurpassed instance of suffering womanhood and sacrifice for the sake of love. The tragic end of her life in the waters of a river reminds us of the scene of immersion of the clay-image of Durga, the Hindu goddess—the rays of the setting sun glittering over her and investing her gradually-sinking figure with a halo of celestial light. Though her character is romantic and full of ideal qualities, the course of her life flows naturally enough and prominently shows the best elements of a Hindu woman. Each of the heroines of these ballads is representative of some characteristic virtue of Bengali women, full of realistic interest and yet so fine. They are not cast after one model. 'Kajal Rekha' illustrates Christ's precept "Resist not evil"—and a capacity to suffer the untold ills of life with Gandhi-like forbearance. In the ballad of 'Kamala' the glorious speech of Kamala at the Raja's Darbar will remind the reader of the matchless acumen of a Portia's argumentations in the law-court. With the dignity and self-control, natural to a woman of high status in society, she forbears to refer directly to the

wicked, erotic and vulgar attempts of the Karkoon but proves her case eloquently with documentary evidence and that of the witnesses summoned to the Darbar, the pathos created by a narration of her early life in which the variegated landscape scenery of our country in different seasons, and the religious festivities and affectionate environment of Hindu household are displayed as it were on a bold canvas, accentuate our sympathy for her and lend to the poem a thrilling interest and charm. The ballad of 'Andha Bandhu' in which a blind man is the lover, is a never-ceasing fountain of lyrical wealth—showing the irresistible power of flute in this pastoral of the Gangetic valley—latterly developed and spiritualised in Vaisnav mystic songs. This ballad is hardly surpassed in our literature for its romantic interest and self-dedication without any flowery or learned expressions. Andha Bandhu typifies the canon of Chandi Das defining real love "কহে চণ্ডীদাস শুন সব ভাই, পীরিতি না কহে কথা। পীরিতি লাগিয়া পরাণ ছাড়িবে, পীরিতি মিলিবে তথা॥" (Hear me O brethren, love is silent and does not express itself in words; real love will be found where one gives up one's life without a word). 'Chandravati' is another great character in these ballads. The spiritual struggle in her life owing to the treachery of Jaychandra and her vehement and deep love for him gives to her the austere grandeur of a marble-statue bearing the worst of ills. She does not speak a word to express the intense anguish of her soul.

There are a few stories of exceptional merit which remind us of the history of Bengal in the 8th century and among these some episodes are of outstanding literary merit. They preserve the memory of an age when the Bengalees were noted for their high enterprise over seas and for their great chivalrous spirit. The story of 'Malancha Mala,' brought to light by Mr. Dakshinaranjan Mitra Mazumdar, stands at the top of this popular literature and has been described by a European scholar—a veteran I.C.S., as one of the best stories which the folk-lore of the world can claim. For a detailed account of the story, the reader is referred to my

work "Folk Literature of Bengal" and to its foreword written by Mr. W. R. Gourlay. In this story there is an assimilation of the culture of the Hindus and the Buddhists which filtered down to the populace from a remote age and is presented in a fascinating language enjoyable to the old and the young alike. The romantic and ultra-human episodes of the tale are meant to engage the listeners and fill the gaps of the narrative creating a background in the manner of the epics. Malanchamala is not alone in this field of romantic stories. There are 'Shankhamala,' 'Kanchanmala', 'Madhumala' and a few other stories which will be found in the "Thakurdadar Jhuli" of Mr. Dakshinaranjan Mitra Mazumdar. In the back-woods of Bengal, in the very interior of her villages where trades and connections with alien people did not generally occur to make Bengali a highbred language and where people spoke almost the same language from generation to generation, and Maulavis and Pandits did not introduce high-flown classical words in our mother tongue, the spoken language has remained almost the same for five or six centuries. Dakshina Babu in the first edition of the "Thakurdadar Jhuli" reproduced the language as he heard it from the lips of old women. But some of the veteran writers of West Bengal and prominently amongst them the Late Babu Akshaychandra Sarkar objected to the language of the stories as unintelligible and crude. Hence Mr. Mazumdar was obliged to revise the book in the subsequent editions to make the language smooth and refined. The force of the original stories has been partially weakened.

The stories, he has collected, are very old and might have been originally composed in the Pala age. Some of the stories we find reproduced with changes of names of persons and places in Green's Fairy tales. They have thus found a circulation all over the world, but the 'Malanchamala' type did not obtain such publicity as these stories are peculiarly Bengali and contain those subtle æsthetic appeals and emotional characteristics to which people outside our province may not react favourably.

The peculiar charm of this ballad literature lies in the fact that the characters are generally impelled by ardent passions not restricted by Brahminic rules. They do not show any sign of conventional literary forms and are simple, sincere and deep,—having an appeal for the whole humankind. We find girls running out of the control of their parents, and also marriages by mutual consent. The heroes take pride in a sea-faring life and merchants declaring that it is on board the ship that they usually performed their marriage ceremonies. Men voluntarily court the dangers of the deep and show the elements of brave and heroic manhood in all critical moments of life. They are a type distinct from the characters of the Renascence literature of Bengal. Women recall the characters of the Gupta age and their free confessions of love seem like the echoes of the distant epic period. These women of the ballads are wonderful creatures. They prove that Indian *Satis*, who courted death on the funeral pyres of their husbands, were not, generally speaking, impelled to do so by superstitious fears or by force, as generally believed by some missionaries. There is no example of *Sati* burnt in the cremation ground in these ballads, but many women here are like living *Satis*, showing the courage, and martyrdom of those who burnt themselves alive of their own accord, and of the impelling love, making them angel-like in their great sacrifices. The image of a woman of this type must have been present in the mind of Haughton, the lexicographer, who, while extolling in his Glossary (pp. viii, ix) the various qualities of high order which distinguish the Hindus, spoke of "the matchless constancy and fearless death of the Indian widows who voluntarily mount the funeral pyre of their husbands."

The figures of these women are lovely as those of the statues of Amaravati and Khajuraha temples. There is the fragrance of the heavenly *Parijat* flower in them. When they love, no restraint, no Sastras can stop their course. Like the Bhagirathi of our legends they carry away all obstructions like that of an *Aairavat*—Indra's elephant—by their undaunted force; their sacrifice at the altar of

love reminds us of the great renunciation of the saints and spiritual masters of India—rare in this earth; yet there is no servile prayer to Brahmins and gods, so frequently found in the later classical Bengali poems. They stand on their own legs, relying on their own heroic action and are far from being the weaklings of the classical age in Bengali Literature. These ballads are short, sweet and succinct. The wild scenery on the banks of the big rivers of Eastern Bengal, the great Bay in storm—the great landscape and the dense wildernesses—the regions abound with luxuriant cocoanut and the tall pines and are infested with wild boars and deers. They are represented in their true colour in an ever-shifting panorama—on the banks of the Kangsha, hairab and Dhanu, forming a beautiful background. The big swamps occasionally coming down to merge in the lower planes of the Gangetic valley and sometimes rising upwards to reach the hilly ground which chains them to the rocks of "the abode of eternal snow," are a perpetual wonder.

There are many ballads which are still unpublished and many that have not yet been collected. The historical ballads of comparatively modern times, as I have already said, do not possess much poetical appeal, but those of them which have come from Chittagong sea-side, chiefly collected by Babu Asutosh Chaudhury, contain animated descriptions of grim warfare between the Portuguese pirates, Muhammadans and people of Arakan in the 16th and 17th centuries. These descriptions are so life-like and vivid that the reader will find himself placed as it were in the midst of these wild scenes. One of them, recently secured by Calcutta University and compiled by Babu Asutosh Chaudhury, is full of historical interest, giving the names of places connected with the main story and its historical environment in a forceful style. The way in which maritime fights were conducted, is described with the vividness of an eye-witness. Throughout these turmoils of wars, risks and dangers, the golden thread of love acts like a magic force sustaining the afflicted life of lovers and illuminating the whole episode with its brilliant array of facts.

I have recently got an unpublished ballad describing the life of an unhappy lover, named Mahmud. After much vicissitude of fortune and persistent effort, he succeeds in marrying his lady-love who in the first period of her matrimonial life reciprocates her husband's love with warmth. But fortune decayed and the couple were reduced to the utmost poverty. The anxiety and care of Mahmud to make his wife happy is described with a subtlety of colouring which distinguish the people of lower Bengal and the Vaisnava *Patas* of the Mahajans. He cared not for his own comfort nor for the safety of his own life, but struggled hard to keep his wife above want and the wears and tears of life. He was ultimately obliged to leave his home, though very reluctantly. The voyage for trade was solely meant for restoring his wife to the ease of her former condition. He was bitten by a snake and was given up for a time as dead. His boat sank in the blue waves of the Bay, but was rescued by the kindness of a girl. But all the while, suffering from starvation, illness and great dangers and risks to which he was exposed, his mind was in the paradise of his wife's love and the only object of his miserable life was once more to have a sight of her. After some years he returned home—a ruined man. The very sight of his home from a distance brought to his mind a hundred associations, filling him with heavenly emotion. One might be reminded of 'Enoch' of Tennyson in this painful situation of the lover. But the two stories are different from one another. One is a secular earthly tale and the other a highly spiritual and romantic one. Mahmud's love is ever-steady and as unalterable as a holy writ. When he learnt that his wife had married his cousin and was happy he stealthily obtained a sight of her. He found her grown more handsome than ever before with the light of health and happiness in her countenance. He was emaciated and pale, a ghost of his former self. He exclaimed within himself.

Supplementary Notes

To

CHAPTER VI

I Miscellaneous Poems
II Mainly on style, literary tastes and language.
III Early prose-literature.

We must remember that during that period when the Bengali language was being most rapidly developed and its literature was growing, the Hindus had already lost their political supremacy. By far the larger section of the Hindus lived in villages, and for them henceforth history lay almost entirely in the story of their social changes. Descriptions of society and its revolutions are found in many works of the Vaisnavas. We have also, however, a small number of works on political history. Some of those written in poetry are noticed below. We reserve our treatment of the historical works written in prose for our account of Bengali prose, upon which we have not yet touched.

I *Miscellaneous Poems*

(a) Historical poems

1. Rajamala, a history of the Rajas of Hill Tippera. This work was undertaken at the command of Maharaja Sri Dharma Manikya (1407-1439 A. D.) by two Brahmin scholars of his court—Sukreswar and Baneswar who were inhabitants of Assam. Durlabh Chandai—a hoary-headed old man, a courtier and the leader of the Chandai community at the time, had much information about the early history of Tippera; and Sukreswar and Baneswar frequently consulted him while compiling the Rajamala. It also appears that there existed in fragmentary condition, earlier works on the same subject from which much

help was received. Those to which reference is made in the Rajamala are (1) Rajamalika (an earlier work on the Tippera Rajas), (2) Yogini Malika, (3) The Laksmana Malika (probably a history of Raja Laksmana Sen of the Sen dynasty of Bengal) and (4) Varunya Kalirnaya. The Rajamala was written in simple metrical verse.

We have also seen a small treatise, evidently very old, in which the history of the Tippera Rajas traced from Duryya, son of Yayati of the Lunar race, is embodied briefly in verse.

Maharastra Purana

2. *Maharastra Purana* by Gangaram. This is an historical work in Bengali verse, which gives an account of the Maratha raids on Bengal led by Bhaskar Pandit in 1741 A.D. These raids, commonly known in our country as the *Bargir hangama*, gave rise to a feeling of general unrest and panic, inspiring the well-known nursery song, sung up to the present day by mothers to lull naughty children to sleep. This couplet which, like all nursery songs, does not convey any clear meaning, runs as follows :—

* "The child is asleep, the whole village is relieved.
"The Maratha raiders have overrun the country,
and the Bulbulis (*Turdus jocosus*) have eaten up the crops.
"How shall we pay the rent?"

Gangaram wrote his historical poem in 1750 A.D.,—seven years before the battle of Plassey. His account of the raids seems to be a fateful one. The author describes how Alibardi Khan, the Nawab, was suddenly attacked by Bhaskar Pandit at Burdwan and made a captive there for a short time. This is borne out by a statement in Tarikhi Yusufi, though in Mitaksarin, Tarikhi Bangala, and in the accounts of Mr. Holwel we do not find this incident mentioned. Gangaram gives a great many facts about the Maratha raids which will be found interesting to the readers of the history of Bengal.

* "ছেলে ঘুমাল, পাড়া জুড়াল, বর্গা এল দেশে।
বুলবুলীতে ধান খেয়েছে, খাজনা দিব কিসে?"

3. *Samser Gazir Gan.* This poem, which runs through 4,000 couplets, describes the life and achievements of Samser Gazi who was originally a robber, and who grew so powerful as to dethrone a king of Tippera and proclaim himself its chief for a time. Samser Gazi lived 200 years ago, and the poem commemorating his exploits is sung by the rustic folk of Tippera to this day. It is said that Samser used to carry the vast riches, he obtained by looting, to the depths of the jungle in the Udaypur hills. He would then dismiss the carriers and with the help of a carpenter make deep cavities in the trunks of large *Sal* trees, where he stored his hoards, and after carefully closing them up with blocks of timber, and effacing all marks of the work, he would cut off the head of the poor artisan, thus removing all chances of detection. In this way absolute secrecy was secured. It is said that even now stray wood-cutters, while applying their axe to the trunks of *Sal* trees in the deep forest, sometimes unexpectedly find themselves in possession of treasure stored up there by the famous robber. The *Samser Gazir Gan* was composed shortly after his death.

4. *Chaudhuri's Larai,* a poem describing the fight between the two Zaminders, named Rajanarayan Chaudhuri and Rajachandra Chaudhuri. The fighting took place at Babupur, seven miles to the north of Noakhali, about 100 years ago, when British rule was not yet settled in that quarter. Rajanarayan was the more powerful of the contending rivals. He is said to have founded a town by cutting down a great jungle which had belonged to Sindur Kazi. The town was called Rajaganja. The author of the poem was a Muhammadan, as appears from his preliminary verses in praise of Khoda. There is an interesting account in the poem, of Rangamala, a beautiful damsel who is said to have played an important part in the affairs.

Chaudhuri's Larai.

5. *Raids by Kukis of Hill Tippera on the villages of the plains.* This poem was written about a century ago, and is still reproduced from memory by many old men of the Tippera district.

Raids by Kukis.

6. *Dara Sekh.* This is a poem by Dvija Rama Chandra. It gives an account of the misfortunes of the Prince Dara, the eldest son of Shahjahan.

Dara Sekh.

7. A poem on *Pratap Chand* who claimed the *gadi* of Burdwan, by Anup Chandra Datta, an inhabitant of Srikhanda. The peom was written in 1844 A.D.

Pratap Chand.

There are numerous small poetical treatises, written about a century ago, describing the flood of the Damodara and its devastating effects on the villages of Birbhum; and on Babu Rajkumar Sen of Kirtipasa who died of poison administered to him by Kisore Mahalanavis, his Dewan, and on various other subjects of minor importance. The poem on the flood of the Damodara was written by Naphar Chandra Das in 1823.

Short historical treatises.

(*b*) Metaphysical and other works

1. *The Maya Timira Chandrika* by Ramagati Sen, which I have already mentioned on page 574, is a work treating of the processes of *Yoga*. He begins the poem in the form of an allegory, much on the lines of the well-known Sanskrit work *Prabodha Chandrodaya Nataka*. The poem begins as follows :—

Maya Timira Chandrika.

*"The mind goes in a fit of anger to the soul—that Prince whose capital town is the body and whose palace is the heart; false vanity is his crown; pompous arrogance keeps his royal

* "কোপে অতি শীঘ্রগতি মন চলি যায়।
যথা বসে নানা রসে সদা জীবরায়॥
তনু যার সুবিস্তার দিব্য রাজধানী।
হৃদি তারি রমাপুরী তথায় আপনি॥
অহঙ্কার হয় যার মোহের কিরীটী।
দম্ভ-পাটে বৈসে ঠাটে করি পরিপাটী॥

company; lust and greed are his two dear friends. The heavenly maidens—peace, forbearance and kindness do not visit the palace, having been insulted. There ignorance reigns supreme as the favourite queen, pandering to all the foolish desires of the Prince, who is found steeped in the well of foul passions."

After this the various processes of *Yoga* are detailed in the poem, on the merits of which we cannot pronounce any judgment.

2. *Yogasara* or the essence of Yoga. As the name implies, this book describes *Yoga*, leading to the emancipation of the soul, and attainment of the stage of beatitude, step to step. The author's name is not found in the book; he introduces himself by his title Gunaraj Khan. He undertook the work at the command of a rich man named Sachipati Majumdar.

Yogasara.

3. *Haramala*, a poem relating to *Yoga*. The author's name is not known.

Haramala and other poems on Yoga.

4. *Jnan Pradip* by Saiyad Sultan who calls himself a disciple of the saint and Fakir named Shah Husen. Though a Muhammadan, the author acknowledges the God Siva as the authority in all matters relating to *Yoga*.

5. *Tanu Sadhana*—a poem on *Yoga*. The author, who was a Muhammadan, writes elegant Bengali and has a profound respect for the tenets of the Hindu *Sastra*.

6. *Jnan Chautish*. This poem contains only 152 couplets. The author Saiyad Sultan explains the metaphysical truth

পুণ্যতাপ উগ্রতাপ লোভ, অনিবার।
দুই মিত্র স্বচরিত্র বান্ধব রাজার॥
শান্তি, ধৃতি, ক্ষমা, নীতি, শুভশীলা নারী।
মান করি রাজপুরী নাহি যায় চারি॥
পতিব্রতা ধর্ম্মরতা অবিদ্যা মহিষী।
পতি কাছে সদা আছে রাজার হিতৈষী॥
নারী সঙ্গে রতিরঙ্গে রসের তরঙ্গে।
এইরূপে কামকূপে জীব আছে রঙ্গে॥"

embodied in the symbol of Siva and Sakti and describes the processes of *Yoga*. This book was written in 1780 A.D.

There are other small treatises on Yoga, a brief notice of which is to be found in the catalogue of old Bengali MSS. published by Munsi Abdul Karim in the Sahitya Parisad Patrika, issued from Calcutta.

The above poems were written within the last 200 years; the latest of them comes up to the middle of the 19th century.

Translation of Kasi Khanda by Jay Narayan Ghosal.

Kasi Khanda by Jay Narayan.

Passing from the subject of metaphysics, we shall here take up a work of translation which deserves a somewhat elaborate notice. It was compiled by its illustrious author with the help of many distinguished Pandits.

From a copper-plate inscription prepared by Raja Kali Sankar Ghosal of Bhukailas—son of Raja Jay Narayan, we glean the following particulars about the poet. Jay Narayan was born in October, 1752. He received a sound education in Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi, English and French. He inherited from his father a vast property which comprised the villages of Govindapur, Garya and Behala. He obtained the title of Maharaja from the emperor of Delhi for his patriotism and munificence, and founded a college at Benares which was called Jay Narayan College after him. He built a temple, moreover, for the worship of the image of Karuna Nidhan (Krisna) at Benares in 1790. He enjoyed the confidence of Warren Hastings and helped the Government of the East India Company in their work of Survey and Settlement in various provinces of Bengal. Jay Narayan died in 1818 A.D. at Benares in his 66th year.

The translation of Kasi Khanda was, however, the joint work of several scholars and one of its chief contributors was a Kayastha nobleman named Narasinha Dev Ray who bore the title of Sudramani. The translation took many years for its

completion. Here is the account given by Jay Narayan himself as to how the arduous work was gone through.

The history of this compilation.

* " Dwelling at Benares, which is situated on the fine noble streams of the Ganges, I was desirous of writing something in praise of the holy city. I thought of translating the Sanskrit work Kasi Khanda into Bengali, but found none who could help me in the undertaking. In the month of January in 1792, an opportunity presented itself for the fulfilment of my wishes. Srijukta Narasinha Dev Ray of the Sudramani family and an inhabitant of Patuli, visited the city of Benares. With him came Jagannath Mukherjee, and in the month of February the work was commenced by us jointly. Rama Prasad Vidya-Vagisa, a learned Sanskrit scholar, explained the text and Narasinha Ray prepared his drafts of the translation in prose, based on the interpretations given by the former. Jagannath Mukherjee turned them into metrical verse; Narasinha Ray corrected the rhymes

* "কাশীবাস করি পঞ্চ গঙ্গার উপর।
কাশী গুণ গান হেতু ভাবিত অন্তর॥
মনে করি কাশীখণ্ড ভাষা করি লিখি।
ইহার সহায় হয় তাহারে না দেখি॥
সিংশত চৌদ্দ শক পৌষ মাস যবে।
আমার মানস মত যোগ হইল তবে॥
শূদ্রমণি কুলে জন্ম পাটুলি নিবাসী।
শ্রীযুক্ত নৃসিংহ দেব রায়াগত কাশী॥
তার সঙ্গে জগন্নাথ মুখুয্যা আইলা।
প্রথম ফাল্গুনে গ্রন্থ আরম্ভ করিলা॥
শ্রীরামপ্রসাদ বিদ্যাবাগীশ ব্রাহ্মণ।
ভাঙ্গিয়া বলেন কাশীখণ্ড অনুক্ষণ॥
তাহারে করেন রায় তর্জমা খসড়া।
মুখুয্যা করেন সদা কবিতা পাতড়া॥
রায় পুনর্ব্বার সেই পাতড়া লইয়া।
পুস্তকে লিখেন তাহা সমস্ত শুধিয়া॥
এইমতে চল্লিশ লাচাড়ি হৈল যবে।
বিদ্যাবাগীশের কাশী-প্রাপ্তি হৈল তবে॥

and prepared fair copies; when forty chapter were thus completed the learned Vidya-Vagisa died, in September, and Jagannath Mukherjee went home to Bengal, for one year. Owing to these causes, the book could not make any progress. In the meantime Narasinha Ray removed himself from the house which he occupied at Benares to Bangalitola; there he found a companion and friend in Balarama Vachaspati who was a profound scholar. Jointly with Vakreswar Panchanan, another Pandit, they finished the translation of 75 chapters,—Vakreswar contributing two chapters —one on Kasi Panchakrosi and the other describing a journey through the city. The work now again came to a stand-still for various reasons. After this, however, we happened to meet with a Pandit named Umasankar Tarkalankara. Though by the will of Providence, this excellent man is blind in both eyes, yet he is possessed of some very admirable qualities. He is a native of Kasipur and a thoroughly truthful man of a highly religious temperament. He never dreams of doing harm to any one, appreciates merit in others, and is a true advocate of noble ideas. The blind Pandit became eager to help in the completion of the

ভাদ্রমাসে মুখুয্যা গেলেন নিজ বাটী।
বৎসর স্থগিত ছিল গ্রন্থ পরিপাটী।
পরন্তু বাঙ্গালীটোলা গেলা যবে রায়।
বলরাম বাচস্পতি মিলিলা তথায়॥
পঞ্চত্রিংশ অধ্যায় পর্য্যন্ত তার সীমা।
বক্রেশ্বর পঞ্চাননে সমাপ্ত গরিমা॥
কাশী পঞ্চক্রোশী আর নগর ভ্রমণ।
এই দুই অধ্যায় পঞ্চাননে সমাপন॥
পরে সম্বৎসরাবধি স্থগিত হইলা।
শ্রীউমাশঙ্কর তর্কালঙ্কার মিলিলা॥
যদ্যপি নয়ন দুইটী দৈবযোগে অন্ধ।
তথাপি তাহার গুণে লোকে লাগে ধন্ধ॥
ইষ্টনিষ্ঠ বাক্‌নিষ্ঠ কাশীপুরে জন্ম।
পরানিষ্ঠ পরাঙ্মুখ বিজ্ঞমর্ম্মি মর্ম্ম॥
লোক উপকারে সদা ব্যাকুল অন্তর।
গ্রন্থের সমাপ্তি হেতু হলেন তৎপর॥

work. His father Rama Chandra Vidyalankara is also a learned Pandit of a quiet and obliging disposition. With the latter I travelled for six months, in search of good and reliable manuscripts. The accounts of different festivities held in the different parts of the year are given in Bengali poetry, literally translated from the Sanskrit texts, Visnuram Siddhanta, a high-minded scholar and a friend of the blind Pandit, helped us with a right interpretation of these Sanskrit texts, and Narasinha Ray finally published the work when completed. The description of the city of Benares and of the origin of this work added to the book, is my own. In it I have given a faithful account of my own observations. Raja Jay Narayan of the family of Ghosal, here ends his account."

The translation of Kasi Khanda is complete in 11,200 lines; it forms a record of patient labour, carried on by half a dozen scholars for many years. In the *Bhanita* (signature) at the end of each chapter we find the name of Raja Jay Narayan, given no doubt by way of courtesy, having regard to the high position and munificence of this scholarly nobleman who initiated and maintained this undertaking, as the patron of the scholars. The

শ্রীযুক্ত রামচন্দ্র বিদ্যালঙ্কার আখ্যান।
তর্কালঙ্কারের পিতা সুধীর বিদ্বান॥
নিজে তার সহিত করিয়া পর্য্যটন।
ছয়মাসে বহুগ্রন্থ করি সঙ্কলন॥
ঋতু মাস তিথি বার বর্ষ যাত্রা যত।
পদ্যেতে আনিয়া সংস্কৃত অভিমত॥
তর্কালঙ্কারের বন্ধু বিষ্ণুরাম নাম।
সিদ্ধান্ত আখ্যান, অতি ধীর গুণবান্॥
পণ্ডিত ভাষাতে করিলেন পরিষ্কার।
রায় করিলেন সর্ব্ব গ্রন্থের প্রচার॥
নগর বর্ণন মোর গ্রন্থের কারণ।
প্রত্যক্ষ বৃত্তান্ত তাহা যথার্থ বর্ণন॥
ঘোষাল বংশের রাজা জয়নারায়ণ।
এইখানে সমাপ্ত করিলা বিবরণ॥"

main portion of the work was done by Narasinha Dev Ray of Patuli whose descendants now dwell at Bansberia in the district of Hooghly.

But the chief interest of the work lies in the supplementary account of the City of Benares which the Raja himself gives in Bengali verse. Literal translations from the Sanskrit have little value in this country. The learned do not care to read translations instead of the original texts, and those who do not know Sanskrit, do not care to read literal translation, in which they do not find an adequate or modernised expression of the thoughts to which they are accustomed. The translation of Kasi Khanda is thus a lost labour, though the labour that produced it was great.

A description of the city.

But the supplementary account of the City of Benares is full of interest. In simple and unassuming language the Raja, who was a pious man, jotted down notes in verse of what he saw in the Holy City, a hundred years ago. He begins his description of 'the abode of Siva,' as Kasi is called, with a few poetic lines in which its semicircular shape, as observed from the Ganges, is compared to the crescent moon on the forehead of Siva.

The *Ghats*.

He next gives a short notice of the bathing *ghats*—the Parsvanath ghat, the Asi ghat, the Vaidyanath ghat, the Narada Pande's ghat and so on. There were then altogether 53 bathing *ghats* at Benares and all of these are faithfully noticed. Though the notes are short, the writer makes them interesting by his witty remarks in many of them. He then proceeds to give a description of the *Postas* (embankment), the chief amongst which is the Mirer *Posta*; it is 120 ft. in height and 600 ft. in breadth. Hurriedly taking a note of the great houses, some of which were seven stories high, he gives an account of the *Dhararas* or pinnacles. The pinnacle named Sri Madhav Rayer *dharara* rises to a height of 172 ft.; at 135 ft. there is a seat for visitors, from which a bird's-eye

The *Postas*.

Dhararas.

view of the City of Benares may be taken. *"Like the cliffs of Mount Sumeru, it appears as if the *Dharara* might pierce the heavens." At the time when the Raja lived at Benares, this *Dharara* was used by the desperate and unhappy as a place for committing suicide. The Raja has given a list of the people who killed themselves during his time by throwing themselves down from the above-mentioned seat in *Dharara*. A young Ksetri with his lady-love had disappeared for three days, and on the fourth, they were found dead in close embrace on the ground-floor of the temple; they had evidently thrown themselves down from the great height after enjoying each other's company for three days. But death does not always come to the unfortunate, though he may sincerely wish for it. †"Another person ascended the great height and threw himself down, but he fell on the top of a tree and catching hold of a branch reached the ground safe and quietly glided into his own chamber."

A place for suicide.

Warren Hastings stayed in the garden-house adjoining this temple for a time when he was in that City for carrying on hostile operations against Chait Singh, Raja of Benares.

Instead of the modern centralisation of municipal arrangements, there was the mutual agreement of honest and public-spirited citizens :—‡"In the Mahajantola the lanes were so dark that neither the sun nor the moon could look within them. At night the residents

The lighting of the roads.

* "সুমেরুর দুই শৃঙ্গ যেমত প্রকাশ।
মনে লয় তার চূড়া ভেদিল আকাশ॥"

† "অন্য এক জন সেই ধরারাতে চড়ি।
দৈবক্রমে তথা হইতে তরুপরে পড়ি॥
তরুডাল সহ পুনঃ হইয়া ভূমিষ্ঠ।
অনায়াসে নিজ ঘরে হইল প্রবিষ্ট॥"

‡ "মহাজন টোলী মধ্যে রাস্তাতে সর্ব্বথা।
দিনকর হিমকর করহীন তথা॥

here kept lights in their windows for the convenience of the passers-by."

The writer of the sketch made notes of all that he saw; the short lines call up living pictures before one's imagination. Regarding the Buddhist Lamas (Priests) he says:

The Lamas.

*"The ascetics called Lamas who outwardly profess renunciation are in reality full of worldliness. They transact a prosperous loan-business and trades of various kinds; and everyone of them is immensely rich, having residential houses like palaces."

The various amusements and religious festivities of Benares, the mode in which the citizens passed their evenings in idle gossip, lounging on the banks of the Ganges, and other matters

Social gatherings.

chiefly of social and domestic interest have been briefly noted. A chapter is devoted to the silk industry for which the Benares weavers have always been so famous. We find in this chapter a list of various kinds of cloth which used to be manufactured there,—the far-famed Benares *Sari*, the fine silken stuff coloured with various dyes, a piece of which used to sell for Rs. 200, velvet of the first quality,

Silk industry.

stripped silk with which turbans were made, silk adorned with gold embroidery and so on. He concludes his remarks under this head by saying,—†"They show admirable skill in making artistic designs on cotton with coloured silk threads, but they cannot produce fine cotton pieces of the first quality." While writing these lines, the Raja evidently had in mind the unapproachable *muslins* of Dacca.

একারণ নিশাযোগে পথিকের প্রীতে।
দীপ-শিখা করে সবে নিজ খিড়কিতে॥"

* "নামা সন্ন্যাসীর কত শত মঠ।
বাহে উদাসীন মাত্র, গৃহী অন্তঃপট॥
সদাগরী মহাজনী ব্যবসা সবার।
এক এক জনার বাড়ী পর্ব্বত-আকার॥"

† "সাদাতে রেশম পাড়ি কত রঙ্গ করে।
শুদ্ধ সাদা অদ্ভুতম করিতে না পারে॥"

Next, he proceeds to describe the temples. The accounts are vivid and life-like. He begins with a description of the temple of Ahalya Bai, the famous Maratha queen, who spent three lakhs of rupees on building a beautiful shrine at Benares. Next, he describes the temple of Visnu Mahadeva, Kanchi and others. The architectural points of the edifices are mentioned, and the use served by their important apartments is also described at some length.

The temples.

The lanes of Benares were at one time scenes of bloodshed, assassination and plunder. The Ahir Rajputs are described as always carrying swords with them. *"Each looks like a king of death (Yama). If he happens to have a grudge against a man, he does not feel the least scruple in wounding him. Every month there is deadly strife, and many heads roll on the ground as a result."

Lanes of the city—scenes of bloodshed.

Our author's account of the Hindu women who visited the shrines or lived holy lives in the city, during his time, verges on the poetic :—

†"Some of them wear bracelets made of the horns of rhinoceros, mounted in gold which look like dark clouds lined by lightning. Their lovely tresses that hang loosely down their backs are peerless; over the breasts of some hang necklaces of bright pearls, which look as

The Hindu women

* ".....যমের আকার ॥
যার সঙ্গে যাহার আক্রোশ বোধ থাকে।
অনায়াসে নির্ঘাত আঘাত করে তাকে ॥
এইমতে প্রতি মাসে প্রায় হয় দ্বন্দ্ব।
ক্ষণমাত্রে গড়াগড়ি যায় কত স্কন্ধ ॥"

† "গণ্ডারের চুড়ী কারু কনক-রচিত।
ঘোর ঘন মাঝে যেন তড়িত জড়িত ॥
কি উপমা দিব যেই পিঠে দোলে বেণী।
.....
কারু উরোদেশে মুক্তা-মালার দোলানী।
হিমাচলে আন্দোলিত যেন মন্দাকিনী ॥"

though over the peaks of the Himalaya flowed the white stream of the Ganges."

But the Raja knew where to stop. At this stage of his description, he suddenly cuts it short by saying :—

†"The sight of women should create in the mind feelings of respect; never should any unholy thought be entertained."

This account of Benares giving a topography and other details about the city of a particular period will increase in value, in course of years, and will possess the same interest as the account of Jerusalem by Mandevile, Brahmakhanda by Vyasa, and Navadvipa by Narahari Chakravarty.

The interchange of customs and ideas between Hindus and Muhammadans.

Hindus and Muhammadans had now lived in Bengal for long years in close proximity and on terms of peace and unity, and they were naturally influenced by one another in many respects. In Ksemananda's Manasa-Mangal, written more than 300 years ago, we find a passage in which it is told that in the steel-house made for Laksmindhara, along with many other charms to ward off evil influences, a copy of the Koran was kept. Many a Muhammadan offered *puja* at Hindu temples, as the Hindus offered *sinni* at Muhammadan mosques. In the N. W. Province the Hindus celebrated the Mahorum festivals with as great enthusiasm as the Muhammadans. Mirza Husen Ali, a native of the Tippera district, who lived a hundred years ago, not only composed songs in praise of the goddess Kali, but worshipped her at his house with great *eclat*; and Garib Husen Chaudhury of Dacca, a contemporary of the Mriza, another Muhammadan zaminder, was a devout worshipper of Sitala Devi, the goddess of small-pox, worshipped by the Hindus.* Gol Mahmud is

† "এ সব দর্শনে ভক্তি মনেতে হইবে।
কদাচিৎ অন্যভাব মনেতে নহিবে॥"

* Garib Husen Chaudhury, when only 24, had gone a-hunting in the jungles on the banks of the Buri Ganga, where he chanced to see an image of Sitala Devi in clay placed

to-day the leader of a professional party of singers in Tippera who sing only praises of the goddess Kali, and his party carries the palm in this respect and gets engagements in preference to Hindu parties at the houses of the orthodox Hindus. Hindus have borne Muhammadan names and the Muhammadans are often called by Hindu names and such instances are very common in this country even now. In the Statesman of the 17th November, 1910, there is a leader on an article from the pen of the Hon'ble Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque on this mutual assimilation by the Hindus and the Muhammadans of the customs and thought of each other. The article appeared in the magazine—"Modern Behar." We quote from the Statesman,—"From the beginning the Musalman invaders adopted wholesale the customs of the Hindus, says Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque, and when these went entirely against their religious ideas, they so adapted them as to give a semblance of comformity to their own religion. From birth to death at every stage of life, the Mahomedan in India perform ceremonies which are of purely Hindu origin. When he is born, the songs sung are not of Musalman conception but those in which allusions to Sri Krisna are frequent. The series of ceremonies which are performed during pregnancy are adopted from the Hindus, and the symbols of Hindu religions and philosophical ideas play the most important part. At marriage the ceremonies are even more Hinduised. In Islam the simple reading of the Nikah is quite sufficient to complete the marriage contract, and unnecessary and wasteful ceremony has always been expressly discouraged. But the Indian Musalman goes through a long series of festivities and ceremonies, most of which are bodily importations from the Hindus, while others are adapted with slight

on the sand bank, and calling her a witch, aimed a shot at the clay image, as a mark of his contempt. The bullet fell on one of the eyes of the image, and disfigured that side of the face. That night Garib Husen caught fever, and the symptoms of small-pox quickly followed. The goddess is said to have appeared to him in a dream and told him that she would spare his life, but take one of his eyes, as he had done hers. Garib Husen recovered with the loss of an eye, and since then turned into a devout votary of the goddess.

modifications to give them some colour of Mahomedanism. The custom, in connection with marriage ceremonies to which Mahomedan ladies attach the greatest importance, is of purely Hindu origin; so, too, is the line of vermilion and the dot on the forehead, while the bridal songs are all in Hindi, a language which is certainly not the mother-tongue of the Musalmans. Funeral rites, too, can be easily traced to a Hindu origin, and widow re-marriage, which is not only permitted but enjoined by Islam, is considered a disgrace in Muslim as well as in Hindu society. The mutual participation in religious festivals is a phenomenon which strikes even the European observer, though perhaps none have had the experience of Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque himself, who relates that in his childhood at Mohorum time, he has seen Hindus weeping as copious tears at the recital of the incidents of Karbala, as any pious Shia would do. But perhaps the most striking instance of the sympathy of ideas, to which Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque refers, is the well-known sight of Hindus revering the shrines of Musalman saints and martyrs in the same degree as, if not in a greater degree than, Musalmans themselves. Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque repudiates the idea that this is to be attributed merely to the superstitious nature of the Hindu. "It is to be ascribed to a deep truth ingrained in "the human nature and discovered by Hindu "philosophers." No man is absolutely bad or good. Some are more, others less so. If a man was adored by his own people who know him well, the good in him must have predominated over the bad, and, acting on this principle, the Hindus adore and worship the good qualities of the man and not the man himself. "To me," says Mr. Mazhar-ul-Haque, "this worship of the Musalman saints and pious men by the Hindus reveals another side of their lovable nature, and my heart goes out to them in gratefulness and fraternal love."

The Muhammadans of Rajshahi have the monopoly of *Bhasan Gan* or songs of Manasa Devi. In Chittagong this fusion of ideas and interchange of customs and usages seems to have reached its highest point. In a Bengali poem called the Behula

Sundari, written by Hamidullah of Chittagong, we read that the Brahmins who had assembled to find out an auspicious day for the hero's journey abroad, consulted the Koran for the purpose. The hero, who was the son of an orthodox Hindu merchant, obeyed the injunctions "as if they were laid down in the Vedas" and started on his voyage, 'praying to Allah' for his safety! Even at the present time the lower classes of Hindus in Chittagong use the expression *Allar hukum* (command) in the same sense as '*Deo volente*.' Aptabuddin, another Muhammadan poet of Chittagong, who wrote a poem called the Jamil Dilaram in 1750, writes that his hero, who was a Muhammadan, went to the nether worlds to seek a boon from the *Saptarsis* or the seven sages of the Hindus.

When two communities mixed so closely, and were so greatly influenced by one another, the result was that a common god was called into existence, worshipped by the Hindus and Muhammadans alike. His name was formed by compounding an Arabic word with a Sanskrit word. He was called Satya Pir. There are many poems on Satya Pir in old Bengali, some of which are noted below :—

A common god.

1. Satya Pirer Panchali by Fakir Chand, an inhabitant of Suchia in Chittagong, written in 1734.

Satya Pir.

2. Satya Pir by Ramananda.

3. Satya Pir by Sankaracharya, written in 1636 A.D. A complete MS. of this poem has been recovered by Babu Nagendra Nath Vasu from Mayurbhanja. It is a voluminous work and is divided into 15 chapters. The book discloses a curious fact about the origin of the god Satya Pir. It is a legendary account, but by comparison with the story in another work on Satya Pir by Nayek Mayaj Gazi, we glean the fact that the Emperor Husen Shah of Gaur, who tried to ensure the goodwill of his Hindu subjects, was the originator of the Satya Pir-cult, which made Hindus and Muhammadans join hands in worshipping a common God. Though in Orissa Satya Narayan and Satya Pir are reckoned as the same God, they do not appear to be identical in Bengal.

There is not a village in Bengal where Satya Narayan is not worshipped once every week, but in these *pujas* the Muhammdans do not join the Hindus.

Poems on Satya Narayan are too numerous to be mentioned here, as there is hardly a village in Bengal in which there is not a poem on the god; they scarcely deserve any notice being generally very short. We have quite a heap of MSS. on the subject giving short stories to illustrate the might and the grace of the deity; but none of them has risen to the dignity of a poem except the Hari Lila of Jay Narayan and Anandamayi, about which we have already written on pages 683-687. Amongst these MSS. we may mention one by Kavi Chandra containing a description of a river trip from Hooghly to the Bay of Bengal with short notices of the places lying on both sides of the river. This account may he found interesting by students of Geography as it was written more than 200 years ago.

Hymns to Siva and Sarasvati by Muhammadan poets.

In a work called Yamini Bahal by Karimullah—an inhabitant of Sitakundu in Chittagong (1780 A.D.), the heroine, a Muhammadan, is represented as praying to the God Siva and in another work named Imam Yatrar Puthi, the Muhammadan author has a hymn addressed to Sarasvati, the Goddess of learning beginning with the lines—

*"Hail O Sarasvati, thou art my mother,
Thy helpless child invokes thee; wilt thou not hear."

Karam Ali.

Karam Ali, a leading poet of Chittagong, sang exquisitely on Radha and Krisna. One of his *padas* runs thus :—

†"Radha wept and said, who amongst you, O my maids, will bring Krisna to me ?

* "আর মা সরস্বতি, তুমি আমার মা।
মা অনাথ বালক ডাকি শুনে শুনে না॥"

† "কান্দ্যা কান্দ্যা বলিতেছে শ্রীমতী রাই।
আন্তাদে, আন্তাদে, মোর নাগর কানাই॥

"Vrinda, my friend, help me by bringing him here from Mathura.

"My heart burns with the fire of love.

"The cuckoos on yonder boughs coo pleasantly,

"How can I describe the agony that is caused by their notes!

"O maids of my heart, tell me who was so cruel as to cause the moon of the Vrinda groves to depart from here!

"No more do the bowers resound with the sweet notes of his flute calling 'Radha, Radha.'

"Alas! am I become as nobody to him? O how sorrowful am I, when I think upon this!

"The poet Karam Ali says, "Hear me Radha, Krisna is always in thine heart; enjoy the spiritual union, and do not weep."

Musical treatises.

There are short poetical treatises on music in old Bengali literature, mainly written by the Muhammadans.

1. Raga Mala or an account of the various modes of Indian music with a poetical description of the presiding deity of each, and with songs in illustration, by Ali Miah, Alaol, and Tahir Mahmud.

শুন আয় বৃন্দা দূতী বলি তোমারে।
মথুরায় গেল হরি আন্ধারে মোরে॥
প্রেমানলে দহে মোর হৃদয় অন্তরে।
বৃন্দাবনে বসিলে, দেখি কোকিল কুহরে॥
কে হরিল প্রাণ দূতি, ব্রজের শশী।
বৃন্দাবনে রাধা বলে ডাকে না বাঁশী॥
সেই সে মনের দুঃখ কহিতে নারি কার ঠাই।
অভাগী রাধারে দিয়ে বুঝি শ্যামের কাজ নাই॥
কহে শ্রীকরম আলি শুন গো প্যারী।
ধ্যানে ভজ নাগর কানাই, কেঁদনা শ্রীমতী রাই॥
নিকটে আছেন তোমার প্রাণের হরি॥"

Karam Ali.

2. Tala nama—a similar work containing songs by Saiyad Ainuddin, Saiyad Murttaja, Nasiruddin, Alaol, Gayeja, Dvija Raghu Nath, Bhavananda Amin, Hira Mani and other writers. This book was compiled in 1840.

3. Sristi Pattan—a work on Indian music compiled by Danes Kaji, Nasir Mahmud and Baksh Ali. This book also gives an account of various modes of Indian music, with a number of songs in illustration of each.

4. Dhyana Mala by Ali Raj. Ali Raj was a fine poet. In this book he gives a detailed account of various modes of music—of the 6 *Ragas* and 36 *Raginis* with directions as to the hour and season suited for singing each, and accounts of the deities presiding over them. The songs given in illustration are all composed by Ali Raj.

5. Raga Taler Puthi—a poem on Indian music compiled by Jiban Ali and Rama Tanu Acharyya.

6. Raga Tala by Champa Gazi.

7. Pada Sangraha—This work also deals with music. It is besides a compilation of songs by different poets of whom Lal Beg contributes a large number.

8. Jubia—a short treatise containing only 20 songs. These used formerly to be sung on the occasion of Muhammadan marriages.

(c) *Stories*

We have a pretty large number of stories written by Muhammadan writers, most of them composed in the latter part of the 17th and in the earlier half of the 18th century. In most of them the decadent taste which marks the age of Bharat Chandra is prominent. Though the heroes and heroines are generally Hindus, yet the inspiration of these poems seems to have come from Persian tales and poems.

Lor Chandrani.

Under this head we should begin with Lor Chandrani by Daulat Kaji,—a poem mentioned by Alaol in his Padmavati. Alaol himself completed the

book, for Daulat Kazi had not lived to finish it. The supplementary portion of Lor Chandrani was contributed by Alaol in the year 1657, Daulat Kazi's work was composed early in the 17th century. He had undertaken to write the poem at the command of Uzir Asraf Khan of the court of Runta Dharma-Raja of Rosang (Chittagong), whose capital is described as situated on the eastern bank of the river Karnafuli. The supplementary portion by Alaol excels the original poem of Daulat Kazi in poetical merits.

Sapta Payakar and other stories.

Sapta Payakar by Alaol—This poem contains seven stories, each said to have occupied one night in its narration.

Ranga Mala by Kabir Mahmud.

Rejoan Saha by Samser Ali.

Bhava Labha by Samsuddin Chhiddik.

A passage in this poem runs as follows :—

" O my mind, on the ocean of this world, you have put out for trade but could win no profit.

" You forgot your real master and did not serve him as you should have done.

" The riches you sought are within you. How foolish are you to seek them elsewhere !

" Call upon Him who is the soul of your soul and He will give you relief.

" The poet Chhiddik here tells how he spent his life in vain pursuits, when he should have been serving his Master."

Yusuf Jelekha—a Bengali rescension of Persian poem of Mahabbat Nama by Abdul Hakim.

Layeli Majnu—a famous Persian tale rendered into Bengali verse by Daulat Uzir Baharam.

Yamin Jelal and Chaitanya Silal—a love-story by Muhammad Akbar.

(*d*) Buddhist poems recovered from Chittagong.

Bauddha Ranjika.

Bauddha Ranjika by Nilkamal Das. This is a translation of the Burmese work Tharu Thang into Bengali metrical verse. The date of composition of this work is not known, but the MS. is more than 100 years old. Nilkamal Das translated it under orders of Rani Kalindi, wife of Raja Dharma Baksh of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It gives an account of Buddha's life from his birth to the time of his preaching the doctrine of Nirvana. It is the only book yet found in old Bengali literature in which Buddha's life is described.

Nilar Bara Masa.

Nilar Bara Masa. Who this Nila (Lila) was no one knows; but the Bengali ladies still observe a fast on a particular day of April in memory of Lilavati. From the poem under notice it appears that Nila's husband turned a Buddhist monk renouncing his home, and Nila passed through unheard of hardships to get him back and win him to the sweets of a domestic life. The poem has come down to us as a rustic song; but though woven into crude rhymes, it has a deep pathos which explains to us the impression that the woes of Lila must once have made on the popular mind. Lila's husband is described as having been an inhabitant of Nanda Patan in Sulluk. His father's name was Gangadhar and his mother's name Kalavati.

MSS. brought to light by M. Abdul Karim.

The works by Muhammadan writers noticed under the head 'Miscellaneous works' have been mainly brought to light by the researches of Munsi Abdul Karim, late Head Master of the Anwara School in Chittagong. We have not been able to see these MSS., but brief notices of them have from time to time appeared in the Vangiya Sahitya Parisat Patrika from which our accounts are gleaned. The MSS. may be traced with the help of Munsi Abdul Karim. Considering the fact that a large number of these MSS. is being

destroyed every year by white ants, worms and fire, as they are generally preserved in wretched straw-built huts, immediate efforts should be made to recover them. Otherwise we may only rise to the consciousness of the necessity of preserving them when it will be already too late.

Muslim writers of Radha-Krisna songs.

The works mentioned above disclose plenty of songs by Muhammadan writers on Radha and Krisna, which show that the love songs of the Vaisnavas were appreciated beyond the pale of their own society, and inspired even that race of *Iconoclasts* who had once gloried in breaking up Hindu temples. The soil of India favours the growth of toleration and sympathy in religion, and it is no wonder to find that those who came with the sword became, in course of time, united to us in love and goodwill.

The works of Muhammadan writers mentioned in this book are all written in more or less Sanskritised Bengali, and not in that style known as *Musalmani Bangala*, which shows an admixture of Urdu, Persian and Arabic words with corrupt Bengali.

Works written in *Musalmani Bangala*.

A vast literature of the rustic Muhammadans is to be found written in *Musalmani Bangala*, and there are many works of this class, some of which may be traced back to the 16th century. But for various reasons we have not found it convenient to include books written in *Musalmani Bangala* in the present work.

II. Mainly on Style, Literary Tastes and Language

The chief feature of the poetical literature dealt with in this chapter is its wealth of *chhandas* or metres adopted from Sanskrit. Though in the earlier epochs some of our writers had tried to introduce Sanskrit metres, their attempts were marked with that crudeness which often characterises the products of beginners. Bharat Chandra has done yeoman's service to our literature by enriching it with various

The Sanskrit metres in Bengali.

Sanskrit metres, some of which he imitated to perfection in Bengali. His *totaka* and *bhujanga prayata* are almost faultless —a success which could not have been anticipated in a language that seemed so unsuited as our own for the rich and varied metres of Sanskrit, especially as there is no distinction between long and short vowel sounds in its syllables. Rama Prasad was the first to attempt some of the Sanskrit metres in high-flown Bengali, and though his efforts were not crowned with a full measure of success, yet he discovered the innate strength of our language, which gave promise in his writings, of happier developments. In the Vidya-Sundara by Rama Prasad we often find the right accent of vowels not adhered to, as required by the particular metre that he attempted. For instance in his *totaka* in the line ধনি মুখ চিবুক ধরে যতনে the উ is untenable in মু and বু owing to its short sound. In the Harilila by Jay Narayan, another clever poet, who tried his hand at Sanskrit metres in Bengali compositions, we find his *bhujanga prayata* faulty in many places as for instance in the lines বসিয়া সুবর্ণের পীঠে হাসিছে। প্রবালাধরে মন্দ মন্দ ভাসিছে,—the ই in the second and the eleventh letters and the আ in the tenth letter of the 1st line are incorrect, and in the second line the 1st, the 7th, the 10th, and the 11th letters do not conform to the rules required by the metre; the first three ought to have short sounds and the last (the 11th) a long sound. Numerous instances of such faults may be found; but it was surely a bold step for writers to attempt Sanskrit metres in a language which had no long and short vowel sounds in its current forms. But Bharat Chandra had a remarkable aptitude for hitting on the most appropriate words, and though he had to struggle against these disadvantages, yet he put the materials at his command to the best possible use. His remarkable power of choosing elegant expressions is best evidenced by the fact that though he successfully introduced some of the noblest Sanskrit metres into Bengali, yet there is no trace of any struggle on his part for this end. He creates pictures in words, as for instance, in his description of

Bharat Chandra's signal success.

Siva's great wrath, to which I have already referred on page 563. This could not have been grander in any other language. When we peruse his poems we are so powerfully captivated by his descriptions, that we quite forget that they were wrought in one of the most difficult metres of Sanskrit, with a perfection hitherto unequalled in Bengali. Bharat Chandra's writings have suffered considerably in the hands of his copyists who were ignorant of the rules of Sanskrit verse. They occasionally tampered with the readings, and copyists as a class have always done so in regard to all other poems, with this difference that in the case of works written by other poets they have occasionally improved on the original by such changes, whereas in the case of Bharat Chandra's works they have invariably done more harm than good, as the change of a single syllable would disturb his scheme of metre, a matter of which ordinary copyists had no knowledge.

Siva's anger in *bhujanga prayata*.

I quote below the famous lines in the *bhujanga prayata* describing Siva's anger. Now in the printed books we find শিঙ্গা in the second line for শিঙা, নন্দী in the 17th line for নন্দি (ই having been changed to ঈ as the word forms a compound with ভৃঙ্গী). The metre contains 12 letters in each line and runs thus $-^{\circ}-^{\circ}-^{\circ}-$ The text should be reduced to the following form for a right exposition of the metre :—

* _ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _

* ম হা রু দ্র রূ পে ম হা দে ব সা জে।

⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _

ভ ভ ভ্রুম্ ভ ভ ভ্রুম্ শি ঙা ঘো র বা জে॥

⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _

ল টা পট্ জ টা জূ ট সং ঘ ট্ট গ ঙ্গা।

⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _ ⏑ _ _

ছ ল চ্ছল্ ট ল ট্টল্ ক ল কল্ ত র ঙ্গা॥

* " মহারুদ্ররূপে মহাদেব সাজে।
ভভভ্রুম্ ভভভ্রুম্ শিঙা ঘোর বাজে।
লটাপট্ট জটাজূট সংঘট্ট গঙ্গা।
ছলচ্ছল্ টলট্টল্ কলকল্ তরঙ্গা॥

ফ ণা ফণ্ ফ ণা ফণ্ ফ ণী ফ ণা গা জে।
দি নে শ প্র তা পে নি শা না থ সা জে॥
ধ ক ধ্বক্ ধ ক ধ্বক্ জ লে ব হ্নি ভা লে।
ব ব ম্বম্ ব ব ম্বম্ ম হা শ ব্দ গা লে॥
দ ল ম্ম ল্দ ল ম্ম ল্ল লে মু ণ্ড মা লা।
ক টি ক ট্ট স ন্তো ম রা হ স্তি ছা লা॥
প চা চ র্ম্ম ঝু লী ক রে লো ল ঝো লে।
ম হা ঘো র আ ভা পি না ক ত্রি শূ লে॥
ধি য়া তা ধি য়া তা ধি য়া ভূ ত না চে।
উ ল ঙ্গী উ ল ঙ্গে পি শা চী পি শা চে॥
স হ স্রে স হ স্রে চ লে ভূ ত দা না।
হু হু ঙ্কা র হাঁ কে উ ড়ে স র্প বা ণা॥

ফণাফণ্ ফণাফণ্ ফণীফণ গাজে।
দিনেশপ্রতাপে নিশানাথ সাজে॥
ধকধ্বক্ ধকধ্বক্ অলে বহ্নি ভালে।
ববম্বম্ ববম্বম্ মহাশব্দ গালে॥
দলম্মল্ দলম্মল্ গলে মুণ্ডমালা।
কটি কট্ট সন্তোষরা হস্তিছালা॥
পচাচর্ম্ম ঝুলী করে লোল ঝোলে।
মহাঘোর আভা পিনাকে ত্রিশূলে॥
ধিয়া তাধিয়া তাধিয়া ভূত নাচে।
উলঙ্গী উলঙ্গে পিশাচী পিশাচে॥
সহস্রে সহস্রে চলে ভূত দানা।
হুহুঙ্কার হাঁকে উড়ে সর্পবাণা॥

⌣ – – – – – – – – – – –
চ লে ভৈ র বা ভৈ র বী ন ন্দী ভৃ ঙ্গী।
⌣ – – – – – – – – – – –
ম হা কা ল বে তা ল তা ল ত্রি শূ ঙ্গী॥
⌣ – – – – – – – – – – –
চ লে ডা কি নী যো গি নী ঘো র বে শে।
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
চ লে শাঁ খি নী পে তি নী মু ক্ত কে শে॥
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
গি য়া দ ক্ষ য জ্ঞে স বে য জ্ঞ না শে।
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
ক থা না স রে দ ক্ষ রা জ্ঞে ত রা সে॥
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
অ দূ রে ম হা রু দ্র ডা কে গ ভী রে।
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
অ রে রে অ রে দ ক্ষ দে রে স তী রে॥
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
ভু জ ঙ্গ প্র য়া তে ক হে ভা র তী দে।
⌣ – – – – – – – – – –
স তী দে স তী দে স তী দে স তী দে॥

Besides closely following, as far as possible in Bengali, some of the noble Sanskrit metres, Bharat Chandra performed a much more arduous task by making the couplets composed in the Sanskrit metres rhyme with one another. Sanskrit verse does not require this, but the readers of Bengali during this period considered it to be an indispensable condition of poetical compositions. With all these self-imposed

Rhyming added.

চলে ভৈরবা ভৈরবী নন্দিভৃঙ্গী।
মহাকাল বেতাল তাল ত্রিশৃঙ্গী।
চলে ডাকিনী যোগিনী ঘোর বেশে।
চলে শাঁখি নী পেতিনী মুক্ত কেশে॥
গিয়া দক্ষযজ্ঞে সবে যজ্ঞ নাশে।
কথা না সরে দক্ষরাজে তরাসে॥
অদূরে মহারুদ্র ডাকে গভীরে।
অরে রে অরে দক্ষ দে রে সতীরে॥
ভুজঙ্গ-প্রয়াতে কহে ভারতী দে।
সতী দে সতী দে সতী দে সতী দে॥"

restrictions in his poem Bharat succeeded in hiding the art he had employed, and the verses run clear and limpid reflecting the merry and sublime sentiments of the poet's soul.

Long after Bharat Chandra, Baladev Palit, a poet who wanted to revive the old taste for artistic poetry, which had however, in his time grown to be a thing of the past, employed in his Bengali poem called Bhartrihari Kavya, all the chief metres of Sanskrit. He was a true student, imbued with a refined classsical taste, and his Sanskrit vocabulary was immense. With all these qualities, however, he failed to make any impression in the literature of his period. Bharat had been essentially a poet of his age which had demanded in Bengali poetry a close conformity with the rules of Sanskrit rhetoric; alliteration and other figures of speech were prominent characteristics of the period, and the school, begun by Bharat Chandra served as a model to a host of writers; he had besides been a born poet, who adorned all that he touched, and if he employed Sanskritic metres, it was because a keen appreciation of the beauty of their sound so completely possessed his soul that he could not resist their flow in his Bengali poetry. Baladev, however, wrote with the pedantic object of showing himself learned, and he succeeded in this end, for his readers certainly gave him a certificate that his ingenuity elicited their admiration; but the laurels which adorn the brow of a true poet were not reserved for a writer of his conceit and pedantry. I quote below two extracts from the writings of Baladev Palit to illustrate the metres *Malinivritti* (containing fifteen letters in each line) running thus :⏑⏑⏑ — — ⏑ — — ⏑ —) and *Vansasthavila* (containing 12 letters in each) running thus : ⏑ — ⏑ — — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ —respectively. Malinivritti :—

Baladev Palit.

His attempts to revive Sanskrit metres.

"ফুল সম সুকুমারী, দীর্ঘকেশী কৃষাঙ্গী
অপেল তড়িতাভা সুন্দরী-গৌরকান্তি।
মধুর নববয়স্কা পদ্মিনী অগ্রগণ্যা
যুবক-নয়ন-লোভা কামিনী কামশোভা॥"

Vansasthavila :—

" তথায় ভীমাসিত-ধর্ম্ম-ভূষিত
প্রচণ্ড আভাময় চক্র মস্তকে।
সবিদ্যুতাগ্নি প্রলয়োন্মুখাভ্রবৎ
কৃপাণ-পানি প্রহরী ব্রজে ভূমে॥ "

The lines in the *Malini chhanda* are nearly correct. In the third line of the stanza in *Vansasthavila* the writer commits a mistake in compounding সবিদ্যুতাগ্নি which should have been সবিদ্যুদগ্নি. There are, besides, some other inaccuracies also. Baladev Palit, when putting Bengali verse in Sanskrit metre, omits to conform to the rule observed by the preceding Bengali writers, *viz.*, that all metrical verses should rhyme. Strictly speaking, the words প্রচণ্ড আভাময় are untenable in a Bengali poem which requires, that after the first word in a line containing three letters there should be a corresponding word containing three letters.

Payara Chhanda.

The bulk of the old poetical literature of Bengal is in the metre called the *Payara*. It consists of 14 letters, in each line, and there is a cæsura after 8 letters, If the first word in a line of *Payara* consists of two letters, either the second must have four letters or the second and the third must have two letters each. If the first word has four letters, the second word must have either four letters or the second and the third words, two letters each. If the first word has three letters, the second word must have three letters as well. That verse is defective which violates this rule, though all the letters counted in a line may come up to 14. The first line rhymes with the second and the two rhyming lines make an entire stanza. The word *Payara* has been evidently derived from the word *Pada*. The word '*Paya*' in Bengali which means the foot of a bedstead, or 'Tripaya' which means a three-footed light-stand, illustrates the similar forms derived from the word *Pada*.

Tripadi.

The next favourite metre of the old poets was the *Tripadi*. The *Tripadi* was a verse of the Rig-Veda containing three *padas* or hemistiches. The verses were called *Tripada Riks* (*vide* Panini IV, 1, 9). This metre

which is traced to Rigveda was adopted in Prakrit and through that channel passed into Bengali. In *Tripadi* as in the case of *Payara*, there was in the early times no hard and fast rule about the number of letters, but gradually as the study of metre reached perfection, the number of letters in each hemistich, of which they are three making a half stanza, was fixed. The first two half-lines which rhyme, contain six letters each, and the third half-line which rhymes with the 6th contains eight letters. Jayadeva introduced this Sanskritic metre though without observing any definite number in the letters. Rhyme was no necessary condition. The half-stanza "রতিসুখ সারে, গতম্ অভিসারে মদন মনোহর বেশম্"—sounds as the keynote to the modern *Tripadi* in Bengali. In the next half-stanza, however, '—নকুরু নিতম্বিনি গমন বিলম্বন মনুসর তং হৃদয়েশম্', the first half-lines do not rhyme. They consist besides of seven letters each, and the third half-line, of eight letters. In Prakrit, the verses like 'চরণগণবিপ্প, পড়মলইথপ্প or সত্তা দীহা জানেহী, কণ্ণাতিণ্ণামানেহী,' (Pingala), illustrate that the *Tripada* and the *Dvipada* metres first traced in the Rigveda had branched off into many quaint forms in the Prakrit language. The *Dvipada* and *Tripada* metres attained perfection in Bengali; and various metres in this tongue, such as the *Dirgha Tripadi, †Laghu Tripad, ‡Bhanga Tripadi, §Dirgha Chaupadi,

and its off-shoots.

*" কালীদহের জলে, কুমারী কমলদলে,
গজ গিলে উগারে অঙ্গনা ॥"

Chandi by Kavikankan

†" থাক, থাক, থাক, কাটাইব নাক, আগেতে রাজারে কহি।
মাথা মুড়াইব, শালে চড়াইব, ভারতে কহিছে সহি ॥"

Vidyasundara by Bharat Chandra.

‡" ওরে বাছা ধূমকেতু, মা বাপের পুণ্যহেতু,
কেটে ফেল চোরে, ছেড়ে দেহ মোরে, ধর্ম্মের বাঁধহ সেতু ॥"

Vidyasundara by Bharat Chandra.

§" এক কাণে শোভে ফণিমণ্ডল, এক কাণে শোভে মণিকুণ্ডল,
আধ অঙ্গে শোভে বিভূতি ধবল, আধই গন্ধ কস্তুরীরে ॥

Annada Mangal by Bharat Chandra.

¶Hinapada Tripadi, *Matra Tripadi and *Matra Chatuspadi, etc., have been formed in Bengali by an archaic manipulation of the Dvipada and Tripadi metres, as also by an artistic combination of them.

The earlier *Tripadi* metres were of a crude form. There was neither that elegant rhyming nor that fixity in the number of letters in each line which have rendered it now-a-days one of the most lovely metres in our tongue. We quote the following extracts from the Mahabharata by Kavindra Paramesvara, written 400 years ago, to show how quaint in form it was in those days.

The earlier *Tripadi* and its example.

"শিশু হতে পুত্র, দেবগুরু পূজন্ত,
নাহিক যে পরস্পর ভেদ,
বিপ্রতর্পন্ত, সতত করেন্ত,
অভ্যাস করন্ত ধনুর্ব্বেদ ॥

সতত সত্য ছাড়ি অসত্য না বোলেন্ত।
প্রতিবর্গের, প্রাণ সমসর,
বিচিত্র যোদ্ধা মহাবীর ॥
মাদ্রী গর্ভে হৈল, মোহর প্রিয় পুত্র,
নকুল কোমল শরীর ॥
বহুশত্রু ক্ষয়, করিল পুত্র মোর,
পুনি কি দেখিমু নয়নে।
কহ ত গোবিন্দ, হাহা শিশুপুত্র,
নকুল চলিয়া গেল বনে ॥"

In all the earlier works we find *Tripadi* adopted in Bengali verses for the purpose of conveying sentiments of grief; it was considered to be the fit metre by the poets of old school for

‖"হর মম দুঃখ হর।
হর রোগ, হর তাপ, হর শোক, হর পাপ, হিমকরশেখর শঙ্কর ॥"
Annada Mangal by Bharat Chandra.

*"ঝন ঝন কঙ্কণ, নূপুর রণ রণ।
ঘুন্থ ঘুন্থ ঘুঙ্ঘুর বোলে ॥"
Vidyasundara by Bharat Chandra.

†"হে শিবমোহিনি, শম্ভু-নিস্বনি, দৈত্যবিঘাতিনি, দুঃখহরে ॥"
Annada Mangal by Bharat Chandra.

giving expression to feelings of mourning or of any dire loss, and it was called লাচাড়ী which is no doubt a corrupt form of the word লহরী.

Folly in alliteration and puns.

The artistic school of Bharat Chandra greatly improved the resources of our language, and contributed to that elegance for which it has now won universal praise; but their attempts often produced abortive results also in the craze for alliteration, evinced not only by poets but by writers of prose during this period. Alliteration and puns on words became a notorious literary folly, many writers having carried them to an abnormal excess. One can hardly imagine how a sane man could have produced a composition like the following;—

"রে পাষণ্ড বণ্ড, এই প্রকাণ্ড ব্রহ্মাণ্ডকাণ্ড দেখিয়াও কাণ্ডজ্ঞান শূন্য হইয়া বকাণ্ড প্রত্যাশার ন্যায় লণ্ডভণ্ড হইয়া ভণ্ড সন্ন্যাসীর ন্যায় ভক্তি-ভাণ্ড ভঞ্জন করিতেছ এবং গবাপণ্ডের ন্যায় গণ্ডে জন্মিয়া গণ্ডকীস্থ গণ্ডশিলার গণ্ড না বুঝিয়া গণ্ডগোল করিতেছ।"

Even gifted writers like Iswar Chandra Gupta were not free from the great folly of the age, and we find his prose writings often disfigured by too much indulgence in alliteration. In the Sisu Bodhaka, an elementary book for children, that used to be read in the *Pathsalas* half a century ago, there is much useful and instructive information for the boys to which no one can take objection, but there is an atrocious model letter in it which must have been contributed by a pedantic Sanskrit scholar, the silliness of which, not to speak of its wicked taste, passes all limit of decency, specially as it has been incorporated into a juvenile reader. We need not dwell upon the letter which is an example of a wife writing to her husband, but to show how a spirit of alliteration prevailed in the age, we quote its first line:

"শ্রীচরণ-সরসি দিবানিশি সাধন-প্রয়াসী দাসী"

Not only in regard to alliteration but in puns on words also, the fashion ran to excess. We quote below passages from various writers to show the sort of puns which characterised the

writings of the day. Examples of them are only too numerous in the writings of standard authors of this period:

"ও বীণে, রবিনে, জানকী-প্রাণকান্তের নাম বিনে।
যে পথে আছে কাল রবিসুত রে, সে পথে যেন রবিনে॥"

Dasarathi.

"যতই কাঁদে বাছা বলি সর সর,
আমি অভাগিনী বলি সর্ সর্,
বল্লেম নাহি অবসর কেবা দিবে সর
অমনি সর্ সর্ বলে ফেলিলাম ঠেলে,
"যদি না পাই কিশোরীরে কাজ কি শরীরে
"উপেখিলে রাই স্থান অখিলে নাই"

Krisna Kamala.

The typical writer of the age like Butler's Hudibras

".....could not ope
His mouth, but outflew a trope."

But artificiality can never completely crush nature. Like those tiny weeds and plants whose rootlets pierce through adamantine rocks and draw their sap from stones, the literature of an age held in the iron grip of rhetoric, has yet strange off-shoots which, though humble, discover a strength not possessed by the great,—sufficient to assert the victory of nature over all the forces and appliances employed to thwart her. Some of the *Kaviwallas*, who were almost illiterate, composed songs in unassuming and artless language, which charmed even the highly educated of this age of rigid classic taste by their simplicity. The *Uma Sangita*, of which I have already spoken in a foregoing chapter, composed by writers of meagre education, discloses a style in which simple and elegant words produce, without any attempt at puns or alliteration, a far greater effect on the emotions than all the grandiloquent phraseology at the command of a poetic master of rhetoric could do.

How nature asserts herself.

Not only some of the *Kaviwallas*, but also Nidhu Babu, who was a man of light and leading, preferred simple words and a plainness of style which strikes us by its contrast with the spirit of pedantry that guided contemporary writers.

When Sanskrit metres were being so closely adopted in Bengali poems, and learned scholars were trying to put the art of writing poetry hopelessly out of reach of the common mortals by imposing subtle rules on all forms of versification, Dasarathi Ray's new school of doggerel, called *Panchali*, asserted itself in bold defiance of all metrical rules,—rhyming being the only condition in their composition. He certainly took his cue from the sort of verses made extempore by the *Kaviwallas* as sequel to their songs. The Bengali poetry of a very early age had been called *Panchali*. This was a period when the metre *Payar* had not been fossilised into 14 letters with the rules of cæsura and the arrangements of words in each line to which I have already referred. *Panchali* was the metre for the masses. The last letter of the first line agreed with the last letter of the second line; and no other restraint was put upon it. Sometimes we get couplet of the following nature :—

Dasarathi's *Panchali* —a departure from classical model.

" পরিধানের সাড়ী দিল ময়নামতি জলত বিছায়া।
যোগাসন করিল ময়না ধরম স্মরণ করিয়া॥"

Manik Chandra Rajar Gan.

The first line contains 20 letters and the second line 19. There are also numerous instances of very short lines, as " তার বদলে ছয় মাস কাল খায় " (13 letters).

Dasarathi revised the *Panchali* with this difference that without conforming to the rules of the *Payar*, *Tripadi*, or any other kind of Bengali metre, he had still a way of rhyming of his own, and the expressions that he particularly chose were not crude or inelegant as in their earlier prototypes, but were generally of a refined character, though simple and colloquial. The *Panchali* suited the understanding of illiterate audiences who were taken by surprise by the wonderful rapidity and flow of doggerel-rhyme, which took a wild course, owing to its freedom from the restraints of any regular metre. I quote a few verses from Dasarathi's *Panchali* :—

" রাজার মায়ের এমনি গুণ—(11 letters)
ভাল করুন বা না করুন—(10 letters)
না গেলে পরে মন্দ করবেন রাগে—(13 letters)
উনে বল্‌ছেন পাবে অশ্ব—(10 letters)
আমি বল্‌ছি পাব ভস্ম—(9 letters)
পোড়া কপালে জোড়া নাহি লাগে " (11 letters)

The first line rhymes with the second, the third with the sixth and the fourth with the fifth, so he follows no fixed code. Besides this, while going on with his verses in the above strain, he suddenly introduces a quite different form, which shows some affinity with the *Tripadi*, more often breaking its rules, however, than conforming to them.

When the rules of metre had put some complex restraint on metrical compositions, the *Panchali* and the extempore verses of the *Kaviwallas* opened out a new channel for the free expression of the thoughts and sentiments of our masses for whom Bengali had already become too learned,— not so much in its vocabulary as in its artistic forms and in the subtle conditions of its metre.

Learned discussions.

This was an age when a display of classical learning was made the vehicle of the vernacular, and as a matter of course it was most in evidence in the discussions of scholarly Brahmins on various points of philosophy and literature. On these occasions there were animated scenes in which the Brahmins, in the enthusiasm of advocating their own points, often dragged their opponents by the locks of hair that dangled behind their shaven heads, or otherwise offered what appeared like affronts of a personal nature. These of course never reached any very immoderate excess. The lock was really pulled to draw the attention of the opponent to the points which his rival *Pandit* had so enthusiastically tried to establish. In a heated scene of this nature box after box of snuff was emptied of its contents in a few moments, and the discussion sometimes continued day and night. There was invariably a judge or mediator where two *Pandits* argued, and his duty was not only to give the final verdict, so that the vanquished might not argue any more, but

also to interrupt when any irrelevancy or want of moderation marked the controversy. The *Pandits* were generally called to a rich man's house on the occasion of *Sradh* and other religious ceremonies, and those who excelled in open controversy with their rivals were entitled to special rewards, though many would not accept any gift whatever, priding themselves both on their scholarship and their poverty. This system of inviting the *Pandits* by rich men is still preserved in Bengal *in form* ; but with the decadence of the spirit of patronising Sanskrit learning, the matter has lost the great importance and interest which it once possessed. In rich men's houses, the well-known *Pandits* not only in Bengal, but of the whole of India, used to be assembled for the discussion of Philosophy, Logic, Poetry, Astronomy, Theology and other subjects. Thus learning received a social impetus, and even fresh life on such occasions. Opportunities were frequently offered to *Pandits* for such meetings, so that during a period when there were no facilities of communication, and no proper conveyances for undertaking long journeys, this system kept alive a continual interchange of high thoughts and thus contributed to the preservation and development of classical learning. The *Pandits* led very simple lives, without coveting earthly fortunes or caring for luxury of any kind, and were quite indifferent to praise or blame—often really devoted to a high spiritual life and to the cause of learning. The following passage from Jay Narayan's Hari Lila shows what the discussions of the *Pandits* were like. The poet describes a meeting on a festal occasion.

The meeting of the learned

and its great usefulness.

The description of a meeting.

"The learned Brahmins received letters of invitation and hastened to attend the meeting.

"ব্রাহ্মণ পণ্ডিতগণে, পাইয়া পত্র নিমন্ত্রণে,
উপনীত সভা আয়োজনে।
কেবল অধিষ্ঠান মাত্র, দান নিতে নহে পাত্র,
ধর্ম্ম সংস্থাপন কারণে॥

" They were present there with the sole object of furthering the cause of their religious doctrines and were not prepared to accept any gifts.

" Their faces beamed with intelligence, and dressed in white garments, they seated themselves on scarlet-coloured Bhutan seats.

" They wore the mud of the sacred Ganges on their foreheads; and white sacred threads adorned their breasts.

" As soon as they took their seats they commenced an animated discussion.

" The Logicians stepped forward to discuss the questions of conclusions from given premises, and the evidence of the senses, pointing out the connection between proof and the thing proven.

" They cited Kusumanjali as their authority and tried to establish the fact of the divine existence by various methods of argument.

" In a discussion about words and topics, containing long compound words of which each would take half an hour to recite, the grammarians began to find fault with one another's arguments, and made home-thrusts against their opponents, basing their discourses chiefly on the supplement by Gopinath.

তেজসপুঞ্জ সুকিরণ, শুক্লবর্ণ সুবসন,
ভালেতে গঙ্গামৃত্তিকা ফোঁটা।
শুক্ল যজ্ঞোপবীতে, রক্ত ভোট আসনেতে,
বসিতেহি বিচারের ঘটা॥
অনুমান প্রত্যক্ষেতে, পরস্পর সম্বন্ধেতে,
তার্কিক ঘটায় নানা তর্ক।
প্রমাণ কুসুমাঞ্জলি, নানা মতে ব্রহ্ম বলি,
একে আর ঘটায় সম্পর্ক॥
পদ পদার্থ বিচারেতে, এক দণ্ড সমাসেতে,
কার কত নিন্দিত ঘটাইয়া।
বৈয়াকরণিয়া সবে, বিচার কর্কশ রবে,
গোপীনাথ পরিশিষ্ট লইয়া॥

"In another quarter sweet discourses on rhetoric were going on. Their subject was figurative allusions and the suggestions they contained. They drew illustrations in support of their theories from the Kavya Prakasa.

"There were fair fights on literary subjects also. Mediators were often called in to give their verdict in respect of the interpretations, given by opposing parties, of the meanings of lines from the Raghu, the Bhatti, the Sisupala Badha and the Naisadha Kavya.

"Those who discoursed on the Puranas quoted chapter and verse from Vasistha and others, elected Astrology as the subject of their discourse, discussed particular conjunctions of planets and their aspects, positions, and influences in regard to human life. Their chief authority was the Suryya Siddhanta.

"The Vedantists held that the supreme soul pervades all; virtue and vice, which appear to us as such from a superficial point of view, are merely phenomenal. All alike spring from Him. There is nothing hostile or friendly. Such ideas are

মধুর বাক্যের বাণী, অলঙ্কার শুনি ধ্বনি,
এক দিগে কহিছে রসেতে।
ধ্বনি বাক্য করে কয়ে, ব্যঞ্জনাদিক লয়ে,
কাব্য প্রকাশ উদাহরণেতে॥
নানা ছন্দে শ্লোক পাঠ, সাহিত্যে বিচার ঠাট,
কত মত বর্ণনা ভাবের।
রসিক বিবুধগণে, মধ্যস্থ পণ্ডিত মানে
রঘু, ভট্ট, মাঘ, নৈষধের॥
পৌরাণিক পণ্ডিতে, নানা মত প্রসঙ্গেতে,
বিচার করিছে ভাবি মনে।
বশিষ্ঠাদি বেদ জানে, অনুক্ষ ভাবগণে,
অন্ত প্রত্যন্তর লিখি।
দশা বিদশা বসতি, জানায় সাধু প্রতি,
সূর্য্য সিদ্ধান্তের মত দেখি॥
সকলেতে ব্রহ্মময়, বেদান্তে এমত কয়,
পাপ পুণ্যালয় নিরঞ্জন।
শক্র মিত্রময় তিনি, জ্ঞান ভেদে ভিন্ন মানি,
শঙ্করাচার্য্যে এ লিখন॥

merely illusive. He alone is really the root of all. This is the view, the Vedantists argued, that was held by Sankaracharyya; also that the great law-giver Sula Pani, Manu, and others have openly avowed its truth."

The education of women.

Among respectable people the women-folk not only received a sound education in Bengali, but often a good knowledge of Sanskrit as well. Anandamayi's education made her a match for any ordinary Sanskrit-knowing *Pandit*; and of her literary compositions, bearing marks of great pedantry, we have already spoken in full. Yajnesvari, a poetess who composed songs for a Kavi party, lived in the beginning of the 19th century, and some of her songs show a creditable command over the language. Gangamani Devi, a sister of the poet Jay Narayan Sen and a native of Vikrampur in Dacca, composed a large number of songs, which the local women still sing during marriage festivities.

Arabic, Persian, and Hindi.

In the courts of the Hindu Rajas it was considered indispensable for a scholar to have a knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Hindusthani. The *Pandits* who scrupulously avoided all court-influences, considered a knowledge of any other language than Sanskrit profane, just as they would not touch a non-Hindu or a low caste Hindu for fear of contamination.

But those Brahmins, who did not soar so high in their fancied greatness and cared for the favour of the Rajas, learnt Bengali, Persian, Arabic and Hindusthani along with Sanskrit, and Bharat Chandra Ray Gunakar was a man of sound culture in all these tongues. In describing a conversation between the Emperor Jahangir and Raja Man Sinha, our poet says :—

"পড়িলে বিপত্তিকালে, দোষ যদি ঘটে বলে,
ধর্মশাস্ত্র মতে পাপ নহে।
স্মৃতিশাস্ত্রে লেখা এই, শূলপাণি মত এই,
মুক্তকণ্ঠ হৈয়া মনু কহে॥"

* "It would be right to give the gist of the conversation, that took place between Raja Man Sinha and the Emperor in Arabic, Persian and Hindusthani, for it must have been carried on in a mixed language. I have studied these languages and can write in them; but the account would scarcely be intelligible to ordinary people. Besides, by giving the discourse in different languages I shoul destroy the effect on the reader's mind of my own poetry, and it would lose much of its simplicity. So I must be content with borrowing only occasionally, words from those languages in my Bengali."

But though he curbed his desire in this instance to display his varied scholarship, he did not always use such discretion. He adopted a heterogenous language in a certain short poem for the purpose of display. The following extract will show what such efforts were like.

" শ্যামহিত প্রাণেশ্বর বারদকে গোয়দ রুবর,
কাতর দেখে আদর কর, কাহে মররো রোয়কে।
বক্ত্রং বেদং চন্দ্রমা, চুঁ লালা চে রেমা,
ক্রোধিত পর দেও ক্ষমা, মেটিমে কাহে শোয়কে॥"

Change undergone by words in use and meaning.

Some of the words that were largely used in the 18th century have grown obsolete. The word 'মেনে' for instance, which we meet with frequently in Bharat Chandra's poems, is no longer used in writing. The word seems to have no meaning; it was only used to emphasise a statement or merely to fill up a space in a line of verse which did not have the number of letters required by the metre. The words নেহা, পেখিল, রঘরণী দোহ, এথায়, এবে, এড়িল are not now used in prose; they are confined to poetry.

* " মানসিংহ পাতসার হইল বে বাণী।
উচিত যে পারশী, আরবী, হিন্দুস্থানী॥
পড়িয়াছি সেইমত বার্ণিবার পারি।
কিন্তু সে সকল লোক বুঝিবরে ভারি॥
না রবে প্রসাদগুণ না হবে রসাল।
অতএব কহি ভাষা যবনী মিশাল॥"

There are numerous words in Bengali which have lost their original Sanskritic meanings. The word পীরিত is derived from প্রীতি—love, but the former word in colloquial Bengali has been degraded in sense, and implies an illicit love. It was the promiscuous mixing of men and women in the lower orders of Vaisnava society, which by leading to immorality, caused the word to suffer a descent in its meaning. But at the time of Chandidas, and even of the poets of a subsequent age, the word retained its original meaning in current Bengali and implied a pure sentiment. Chandidas wrote short discouses using the word to imply a highly refined and austere feeling. The word রাগ has two meanings in Sanskrit ; it means colour and attachment. In Bengali it has come to signify fits of anger, probably owing to one's face and eyes being reddened under passion. But at the time of Chaitanya, 400 years ago, the Bengali word had not yet lost its original meaning. In the Karcha by Govinda Das we find it used in the sense of love or attachment, as in the line "রাগে ডগমগ প্রভু করে সন্তরণ." There is no difference in Sanskrit between the words রাগ and অনুরাগ. In Bengali, the one implies anger, and the other love, though the words রঞ্জিত and অনুরঞ্জিত—participal adjective-forms of the two words respectively—have retained their Sanskritic significance. The Bengali word derived from Sanskrit ভর্তা (lit. one who maintains), a husband, has been degraded in Bengali and is not used in decent society, though I cannot make out the reason why. The word ভাণ্ডারী (lit. a store-keeper) does not possess its original elevated sense ; it now generally means a menial servant. The word ভাস্বর in colloquial Bengali means the husband's elder brother ; but in Sanskrit it means shining, splendid. The Hindu women of Bengal consider it sacrilegious to name the elder brother of their husbands. When he is to be mentioned, they refer to him by some qualifying adjective. The word ভাস্বর, originally 'shining,' must have been thus reduced to its present restricted meaning. The words শ্রীযুক্ত and শ্রীমান্ (endowed with Sri—fortune) in Sanskrit have the same meaning, but in

Bengali শ্রীযুক্ত is used in regard to elders or equals, and শ্রীমান্ invariably to junior relations. The word রৌদ্র in Sanskrit means 'fierce,' though there is a rare use of it in that tongue implying sun-shine. In Bengali রৌদ্র is the commonest term to signify sun-shine, and except scholarly folk, no one knows that originally its meaning was fierce. The word মহোৎসব has been restricted in Bengali to imply that particular festivity of the Vaisnavas in which cooked food is indiscriminately distributed amongst the poor, who assemble there without invitation. The word literally means a great festivity, and in Sanskrit it is always used in that sense. Similarly the word সঙ্কীর্ত্তন, which in Sanskrit means reciting or singing, has been restricted in Bengali to a particular kind of singing of God's name by a procession party of the Vaisnavas.

Bengali sculptors.

We find frequent references to sculptural work done in Bengal on stone in which the artisans of Navadvipa excelled. Raja Jay Narayan in his Kasi Khanda says that many orders of stone images for the temples at Benares were executed by Nadia artisans. In the Bhakti Ratnakar we find the name of one renowned sculptor to be Nayan Bhaskar, a resident of Halisahar in 24-Parganas.

III. Early Prose Literature

Bengali, a mixed language.

A people who had lost their political supremacy, and had no voice in the administration of their own country,—who had retired to quiet village-life and pastoral occupations, and had scarcely any occasion to commune with the rest of the world,—what need had they for cultivating prose? Outside their quiet homes they came to towns only for trade or litigation and had to deal with a heterogenous people who would not recognise pure Bengali as a medium of communication. In their correspondence or documentary writings the Bengalees had to adopt a mixed language, into which not only Persian and Arabic but even Portuguese elements had entered in no inconsiderable degree; for these

Portuguese elements.

people were a great power in Bengal, more than two centuries and a half ago; and we read the following account of their language, having been adopted, for business purposes, by Europeans and Bengalees alike. We quote from Mr. Marshman's history of the Sri Rampur Mission, Vol. I. *The writer refers to incidents occurring in 1759. A.D.

"Portuguese came in with the Portuguese power two centuries and a half before, and survived its extinction. It was the *Lingua Franca* of all foreign settlements around the Bay of Bengal and was the ordinary medium of conversation between the Europeans and their domestics; while Persian was the language of intercourse with the native courts. Even in Calcutta Portuguese was more commonly used by the servants of the Company and the settlers than the languge of the country. The charter granted to the East India Company at the beginning of the 18th century contained a provision that should maintain one Minister at each of their garrisons and superior factories, and that he should be bound to acquire the Portuguese language within a twelve-month of reaching India. Clive, who was never able to give an order in any native language, spoke Portuguese with fluency. The use of this language has since died out in Bengal so completely that the descendants of the Portuguese now speak Bengali from their cradle. Yet down to so late a period as 1828, the Governor of Sri Rampur, a Norwegian, received the daily report of his little garrison of 30 sepoys from the Native Commandant, a native of Oudh in Portuguese."

A small number of words subjoined in a foot-note* are among the remnants in Bengali, representing the once powerful

* Pp. 21-22

*Bengali.	Portuguese.	Bengali.	Portuguese.
জোলাপ	... Jalapa.	রেস্ত	... Resto (fund).
টোকা	... Toca (to note down).	সুরতি	... Sorte.
		আনারস	... Ananaz.
নোনা	... Annona (fruit).	আয়া	... Aya.
		আলকাৎরা	... Alcetrao.

Portuguese element, our language particularly in the business and domestic spheres.

The nature of the mixed language.

The prose, in which business transactions were conducted in Bengal, was thus a medley of many different languages, and it was to this point that Halhed, one of the first Bengali grammarians, refers with regret. In the very nature of things a pure Bengali could not grow up. The Muhammadans did not recognise it in their courts, and the people had no power to assert their own tongue in the field of business. As long as Muhammadans held the supreme power, Arabic and Persian were recognised by all as the chief languages of the Court, and in the mixed dialects, which grew up, a resort to these two languages was held to be a mark of distinction. Says Halhed in the preface to his grammar published in 1778—

"At present those persons are thought to speak the compound idiom (Bengali) with the most elegance, who mix with pure Indian verbs the greatest number of Persian and Arabic nouns."

What this prose was like may be seen from the documentary writings still prevalent in courts. The court language still favours a preponderence of Persian and Arabic elements in Bengali, as in 'টাল মাটালে আদায় না করায়' or in 'ওয়াদা কার্ত্তিক মাসে টাকা আদায় করিব।' Curiously enough, remnants also of Sanskrit elements still persist in the language of the courts, reminding us of the ancient days of Hindu supremacy, when all court transactions were carried on in Sanskrit. The form 'কস্য কর্ত্তৃ পত্রমিদং কার্য্যকাগে' has

পিপা	... Pipa.	কপি (শাক)	... Couvi.
পেরেক	... Prego.	কাকাতুয়া	... Catatua.
ফর্ম্মা	... Forma.	কিরীচ	... Cris.
ফিতা	... Fita.	কেদারা	... Cathedera.
বোয়া	... Boia.	গরাদে	... Grade.
বরগা	... Verga.	গির্জ্জা	... Igrija.
বাল্‌তি	... Baldi.	চাবি	... Chave.
বোতাম	... Botao.	জানালা	... Janella.

preserved, though in a ridiculously corrupt style, some of the terms of the Hindu age. In ordinary letters written by the gentle folk of Bengal there was a large admixture of Persian words. Beveridge published some letters of the Maharaj Nanda Kumar in the National Magazine of September, 1872, written to Radha Krisna Ray and Dinanath Samantaji in August, 1756. We quote an extract from one of these letters :

"অতএব এ সময়ে তুমি কমর বাঁধিয়া আমার উদ্ধার করিতে পার, তবেই যে হউক, নচেৎ আমার নাম লোপ হইল, ইহা মক্‌ররর, মক্‌ররর জানিবে, নাগাদি ওরা ভাদ্র, তথাকার রোয়দাদ সমেত মজুমদারের লিখন সম্বলিত মনুষ্য কাসেদ এথা পৌঁছে তাহা করিবা, এবিষয়ে এক পত্র লক্ষ হইতে অধিক জানিবা।"

Causes leading to the development of modern prose.

I may add here that the chief causes that have contributed to the development of Bengali prose in modern times are (1) the preference of Bengalees to live in congested cities, (2) the establishment of Post offices all over the land, (3) the easy means of communication afforded by railways and steamers, helping the unification of different provincial dialects by eliminating provincialisms, (4) the great efforts of Missionaries and of Government, particularly in the earlier periods of British rule, to spread education amongst the masses.

The early Bengali prose-works.

But though circumstances did not favour the development of Bengali prose before the advent of the English on the field, and though Mr. Natheniel Prassey Halhed could not lay his hand upon any prose-work in Bengali, as he tells us in his preface, such works, nevertheless, did exist in the country in his time, and long before it, though they did not possess that importance which would render them accessible to any casual enquiry. I shall here notice some of the books that have come down to us, as specimens of early Bengali prose.

The Sunya Purana

1. The Sunya Purana is one of the earliest works in Bengali, upon which we have already written. It was composed in the 10th century and though it was recast in subsequent times, the few prose portions which

it contains have retained their antiquated form. The sentences are like short riddles and sound more like poetry than prose. Here is a specimen:

* "Who is the scholar in the western gate? Svetai with four hundred followers. Chandra, the Police Officer.....the messenger is not afraid of thee. Chitra Gupta keeps a register." The portion left out is unintelligible. There is a very considerable portion of prose-writing in the book in this style.

Deva Damara Tantra

2. Along with this writing may be placed the specimen of prose which we have found in the Deva Damara Tantra, running as follows: "গোঁসাই চেলা সহস্র কামিনী ডোমা, চাঁড়াল পাই মুই আকাটন বিষ হাতে এ গুয়া পান খাইয়া।" We avow our inability to translate or interpret this.

3. A small prose treatise, ascribed to the poet Chandidas who lived 500 years ago, has come down to us. It is called Chaitya Rupa Prapti. The booklet seems to interpret in mystic language the incantations and riddles of the *Tantrikas*. The MS. copy in our possession was written in the year 1674. The preliminary sentence runs thus:—

Chaitya Rupa Prapti.

"চৈতন্যরূপের রা চ অধরূপ লাড়ি। রা অক্ষরে রাগ লাড়ি। চ অক্ষরে চেতন লাড়ি। র এতে চ মিশাল। ইবে এক অঙ্গ লাড়ি। রাগ রতি। লাড়ির নাম সুধা॥ সেই লাড়ি সাতাইস প্রকার।"

Prose works by Sahajiyas

A host of writers of the Sahajiya cult wrote short treatises in prose or introduced prose passages in their poetical works. We briefly notice them below.

1. Dvadasa Pata Nirnaya, written early in the 16th century by Nilachal Das.

2. Acharya Nirnaya by Chaitanya Das.

3. Rupa Gosvamir Karika. Rupa Gosvami, who is said to have written this book, was born in 1489 A.D. He was a

* "পচ্ছিম দুয়ারে কে পণ্ডিত। সেতাই যে চারিদণ্ড গতি আমি লেখা। চন্দ্র কোটাল যে বসুয়া ঘটদাসী। দূত নাহি ডরাই তুয়াক দেখিআ। চিত্রগুপ্ত পাঁজি পরিমান কর এ দূত অমর বিদ্যমানে॥"

Sunya Purana.

contemporary and follower of Chaitanya Deva. The MS. copy with us was written in 1675.

4. Ragamayi Kana by Krisna Das Kaviraj who lived in the middle of the 16th century.

5. Atma Tattva Jijnasa.

6. Dasyadasatattva Bhavartha. The copy with us was written in 1685 A.D.

7. Alamvana Chandrika by Krisna Das Kaviraj. The MS. copy found was prepared in 1655 A.D. and the composition of the treatise must have been at least half a century earlier.

8. Upasana Tattva—the MS. is dated 1755.

9. Siddhi Tattva—the MS. is dated 1755.

10. Trigunatmika Do.

11. Atma Sadhana.

12. Bhoga Patala.

13. Deha Bheda Tattva Nirupana.

14. Chandra Chintamani by Prem Das.

15. Atma Tattva Jijnasa Saratsara by Krisna Das.

16. Sadhana Traya.

17. Siksa Patala.

18. Siddhanta Tika by Domu Ghose Gosvami.

19. Krisna Bhakti Parayana.

20. Upasana Nirnaya.

21. Svarupa Varnana.

22. Rajamala by Narottam Das.

23. Deha Karcha by Narottam Das.

24. Champaka Kalika. This book describes the incidents of the release of Sanatan Gosvami from prison.

25. Atma Tattva.

26. Panchanga Nigurha Tattva.

27. Hari Namer Artha.

28. Gosthi Katha.

29. Siddhi Patala.

30. Jijnasa Pranali.

31. Java Manjuri.

32. Vraja Karika.
33. Rasa Bhajana Tattva, copied in 1650.
34. Vrindavan Parikrama, copied early in the 18th century.
35. Vedadi Tattva Nirnaya.
36. Vrindavan Lila, copied in the middle of the 18th century.

We have, besides in prose a vast number of treatises on medicine and on the genealogies of old families written within the last three centuries.

Of the books, mentioned in the above list—Nos. 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 36 are written in prose and the rest in prose and poetry combined. Genealogical works are numerous and in many of them we find elaborate passages in prose. We quote below a specimen of prose from one such work on the Barendra Brahmins of Bengal.

Genealogical works in prose.

* "Adi Sur was a powerful King. He brought to his capital five Brahmins of five different *Gotras*—Narayana of Sandilya Gotra, Dharadhara of Vatsya Gotra, Susen of Kasyapa Gotra, Gautama of Bharadvaja Gotra, and Parasara of Savarna Gotra.

"The whole of Bengal was made pure by the holy influence of these Brahmins, and after the country had been thus improved Adi Sur, the King died."

One thing strikes us here. Prose was more often adopted by the Sahajiya Vaisnavas than by other sects for the exposition of their doctrines. Nos. 32, 34, and 35 show elaborate specimens of prose. The Sahajiyas who were, as we think, originally a Buddhist sect, imbibed this taste for writing in prose from a very early age when the Buddhists used to elucidate their views in prose in the Prakrit language.

* "আদিশূর রাজা বড় প্রতাপযুক্ত রাজা। আদিশূর রাজা পঞ্চগোত্রের পঞ্চ ব্রাহ্মণ আনয়ন করিলেন :—যথা—নারায়ণস্ত শাণ্ডিল্যঃ সুষেণঃ কশ্যপস্তথা, বাৎস্যো ধরাধরো দেবঃ ভরদ্বাজস্ত গৌতমঃ সাবর্ণস্ত পরাশরঃ—এই পঞ্চগোত্রে পঞ্চ ব্রাহ্মণ আনয়ন করা গৌড়মণ্ডল পবিত্র করা আদিশূর রাজার স্বর্গারোহণ।"

Logic and Law in prose.

We have come upon translations of Bhasa Parichchada—a work on Logic, and of Vyavastha Tattva, a book on Hindu Law, copied in 1773, which show that prose was adopted at least two centuries ago, for dealing with highly metaphysical subjects. We quote a passage from the Bhasa Parichchada :

Bhasa parichchada.

*"The disciples of the sage Gautama approached him with these words, 'How, master, may our deliverance be obtained? Graciously enlighten us on this point.' Gautama said—'deliverance may be obtained by a knowledge of the predicaments.' The disciples wanted to know what were these predicaments, and Gautama replied :—'Seven predicaments may be enumerated, *viz* : (1) substance, (2) quality, (3) action, (4) genus, (5) difference, (6) co-inherence, and (7) non-existence.' "

The language of the treatises in the list just given is invariably very simple, though owing to our ignorance of the special terms and technicalities used by the Sahajiya Vaisnavas, much of their writings is unintelligible to us. The sentences are generally short and rarely loaded with compounds. Here is a passage which may be taken as a specimen of the sort of style used by them. We quote from the *Karika* by Rupa Gosvami who lived 400 years ago : † "Victory be to Radha and Krisna! First of all a classification of subjects; proceeding with the enumeration of

* "গৌতম মুনিকে শিষ্য সকলে জিজ্ঞাসা করিলেন, আমাদিগের মুক্তি কি প্রকারে হয়? তাহা কৃপা করিয়া বলহ। তাহাতে গৌতম উত্তর করিতেছেন। তাবৎ পদার্থ জানিলেই মুক্তি হয়। তাহাতে শিষ্যেরা সকলে জিজ্ঞাসা করিলেন, পদার্থ কতো? তাহাতে গৌতম কহিতেছেন। পদার্থ সপ্ত প্রকার। দ্রব্য, গুণ, কর্ম্ম, সামান্য, বিশেষ, সমবায়, অভাব। তাহার মধ্যে দ্রব্য নয় প্রকার।"

† "শ্রীশ্রীরাধাবিনোদ রায়। অথ বস্তু নির্ণয়। প্রথম শ্রীকৃষ্ণের গুণ নির্ণয়। শব্দগুণ, গন্ধগুণ, রূপগুণ, রসগুণ, স্পর্শগুণ, এই পাঁচ গুণ। এই পঞ্চ গুণ শ্রীমতী রাধিকাতেও বসে। শব্দগুণ কর্ণে, গন্ধগুণ নাসাতে, রূপগুণ নেত্রে, রসগুণ অধরে, স্পর্শগুণ অঙ্গে। এই পঞ্চ গুণে পূর্ব্ব রাগের উদয়।"

the qualities, we should note five points :—perception of sound, of smell, of colour, of taste and of touch. These belong to Radha and Krisna alike. The first perception belongs to the ear, the second to the nose, the third to the eyes, the fourth to the tongue and the fifth to the skin. These five perceptions create a desire for love."

Karika

In *Kamini Kumar*, a poem written in the middle of the 18th century, we find a passage written in simple prose, showing a contrast with the subtle and abstruse style of the learned men of the period. We quote the passage below.

Kamini Kumar.

*"When the merchant again and again swore in this manner, the lady smiled and addressed Sona and said, 'Well, my servant. This thief has thus forsworn himself several times, and has surrendered himself entirely to us. Suppliant for mercy as he is, he should not be further molested. In his present predicament, he deserves to be treated with indulgence because he is so helpless. This is what the sacred books enjoin. The number of our servants besides is not sufficient; though he may not be trusted with any responsible work, what harm if he be appointed to prepare *silims* of tobacco for us? That would be a great service in the present state of things.' Sona said, 'well said, my master; let him be kept as a servant.' Kamini thus taking the sense of Sona addressed him thus: "Well, chief, the highly criminal act that you have committed deserves a severe punishment, but owing to your solicitations, humility and promises we

* "সদাগর অতিকাতরে এইরূপ পুনঃ পুনঃ শপথ করাতে সুন্দরী ঈষৎ হাস্য পূর্ব্বক সোণাকে সম্বোধন করিয়া কহিলেক। 'ওহে চোপদার এই চোর এতাদৃশ কটু দিব্য বারম্বার করিছে ও নিতান্ত শরণাগত হইয়া আশ্রয় যাচিঞা করিতেছে, অতএব শরণাগত নিগ্রহ করা উচিত নহে বরং নিরাশ্রয়ের আশ্রয় দেওয়া বেদ বিধি সম্মত বটে। আর বিশেষত আমাদের অধিক ভৃত্য সঙ্গেতে নাই, অতএব অন্যকর্ম্ম উহা হইতে যত হউক, আর না হউক, কিন্তু এক আধ ছিলিম তামাক চাহিলেও ত সাজিয়া দিতে পারিবেক। তাহার আর তো কোন সন্দেহ নাই তবু যে অনেক উপকার।' সোণা কহিলেন 'হাঁ থাকে থাক।' কামিনী এইরূপ সোণার সহিত পরামর্শ করিয়া সদাগরকে কহিতেছেন। 'শুন চোর তুমি যে অকর্ম্ম করিয়াছ তাহার উপযুক্ত ফল তোমাকে দেওয়া উচিত, কিন্তু তোমার নিতান্ত

excuse you this time. You must now become our constant attendant obeying our commands in all respects. Whatever we may be pleased to order, it will be your duty to execute promptly. If you play the truant, you will at once be brought before the king without mercy; on the other hand if you can please us by your obedience and prompt execution of our orders, we promise to consider your case favourably in future." When the merchant heard this he thought, 'By Rama, it is a great relief. I am out of danger now.' He folded his hands, and said to Kamini, 'Sir, the great relief you have given to your most humble servant by granting him pardon is a proof that in a past life you were one of his kith and kin, or else how can this act of favour at the hands of a stranger be explained? Now, by God, I say you are my God-father, I accept you as my master. Whatever order you may graciously be pleased to make, it will be my duty as a humble servant to execute to the best of my powers, and if required, even with my life.' Kamini said, 'What work will you do here? There is not much to be done. I would simply put you in charge of my *huka* for the present; one word more, how long shall I address you as a thief, I give you a name; I shall henceforth call you Ram Vallabh.' The merchant said 'So be it sir.' After such conversation Kamini said, 'Now my

নম্রতা ও বিনয়ে কাকুতি মিনতি এবং কঠিন শপথে এ যাত্রা ক্ষমা করিলাম। এক্ষণে আমার সর্ব্বদা আজ্ঞাকারী হইয়া থাকিতে হইবেক, আমি যখন যাহা কহিব তৎক্ষণাৎ সেই কর্ম্ম করিবে, তাহাতে অন্যথা করিলে তদ্দণ্ডে রাজার নিকট প্রেরণ করিব, তাহার আর কথা নাই। কিন্তু যদি কর্ম্মের দ্বারায় আমাকে সন্তোষ করিতে পারহ, তবে তোমার পক্ষে শেষ বিবেচনা করা যাইবেক।' সদাগর এই কথা শুনিয়া মনে মনে বিবেচনা করিলেক, যে রাম বাঁচা গেল, আর ভয় নাই। পরে কৃতাঞ্জলি পূর্ব্বক কামিনীর সম্মুখে কহিতেছে, 'মহাশয় যে ঘোর দায় হইতে এ দাসের প্রাণ রক্ষা করিলেন ইহাতেই বোধ হয় আপনি জন্মান্তরে এ দীনের কেহ ছিলেন, তাহাতে কোন সন্দেহ নাই, নতুবা এমত উপকার পর পরের যে তো কখন করে না। সে যাহা হউক আজি হইতে কর্ত্তা তুমি আমার ধরম বাপ হইলে, যখন যে আজ্ঞা করিবেন এই ভৃত্য কৃতসাধ্য প্রাণপণে পালন করিব।' কামিনী কহিলেক, 'ওহে চোর তুমি আমার আর কি কর্ম্ম করিবেক, কেবল হুকার কর্ম্মে সর্ব্বদা নিযুক্ত থাকহ, আর এক কথা তোমাকে চোর চোর বলিয়া সর্ব্বদা বা কাঁহাতক ডাকি, আজি হইতে আমি তোমার নাম রামবল্লভ রাখিলাম।' সদাগর কহিলেক 'যে আজ্ঞা মহাশয়।' এইরূপ কথোপকথনান্তে ক্ষণেক বিলম্বে কামিনী কহিলেক 'ওহে রাম বল্লভ

Ram Vallabh, do kindly prepare a *silim* of tobacco for me.' Ram Vallabh immediately prepared a *silim* and bringing the *huka* held the pipe before Kamini. Ram Vallabh being appointed to the work soon became an expert in the art, and it became the subject of his constant thought, so much so that if Kamini called him while dining or asleep, saying 'Where have you gone, my Ram Vallabh?' He would immediately answer, 'Sir, I am preparing tobacco.'

For conveying the humour of the passage an introduction to the story is necessary. The young merchant Kumar, the husband of Kamini, went to a distant country for trade immediately after his marriage. There he fell in love with a young princess and was admitted into the Raja's harem in the guise of a maid servant. There he stayed for a fairly long time, till his wife Kamini became anxious about his safety, and started in the guise of a prince with her maid Sona, dressed as a young man. After a weary search—they traced Kumar, and learning all about him went to the palace of the Raja, whose daughter had kept him in her vicinity as a lover. Kamini, who was a very beautiful woman, played her part as the young prince so well, that the Raja offered his daughter in marriage to her. After the marriage was over, she at once detected the guilty man, her own husband, and brought the matter to the notice of the Raja, playing her mock-anger with admirable tact. The Raja in great consternation offered the thief to his false son-in-law saying that he might inflict any punishment on him that he liked,—at the same time he begged him to pardon his daughter. Kamini, on the pretext of going away

একবার তামাক সাজ দেখি।' রামবল্লভ 'যে আজ্ঞে' বলিয়া তৎক্ষণাৎ তামাক সাজিয়া আলবোলা আনিয়া ধরিয়া দিলেক। এই প্রকার রামবল্লভ তামাক সাজা কর্ম্মে নিযুক্ত হইলে পরে, ক্রমে ক্রমে তামাক সাজিতে সাজিতে রামবল্লভের তামাক সাজায় এমত অভ্যাস হইল যে রামবল্লভ যদ্যপি ভোজনে কিম্বা শয়নে আছেন ও সেই সময়ে যদি কামিনী বলে—'ওহে রামবল্লভ কোথায় গেলে হে'—রামবল্লভের উত্তর 'আজ্ঞে তামাক সাজিতেছি॥'

for a short time on business, marched homewards with her husband who took her to be a prince and had not recognised her as his loyal and loving wife. This passage describes what happened after she had taken the thief into custody. She gave him the name of Ram Vallabh, because it was held sacrilegious in those days for a Hindu wife to utter the name of her husband.

Before we close the account of our early prose, we should note some points about it. Though the above passage is connected with the incidents of an illicit love, which forms the subject-matter of the poem Kamini Kumar, the author of which belongs to the depraved school of Bharat Chandra, yet the rest of our early prose which we have noticed, shows that it was mainly employed for the purpose of metaphysical and religious writings. The translation of the Sanskrit work on logic called the Bhasha Parichcheda in simple Bengali, was indeed a bold attempt, for even in the present advanced development of our prose literature the subject is considered to be too intricate for Bengali, especially as it would be most difficult to translate the technical words of Sanskrit Logic. The same may be said of the various translations of Hindu Law books, compiled in prose two centuries ago. We find mention in a poem named Kirti Lata by Raja Prithvi Chandra of Pakur of an author named Radha Vallabh Sarma who translated most of the Hindu Law books before the battle of Plassey. All this shows that though prose-writing was not much in favour with the authors of past ages in Bengal, yet on account of the high development which our language had already attained through its vast poetical literature, no difficulty was experienced by an author in attempting to render into Bengali prose even the most abstruse and metaphysical Sanskrit works. This fact also explains why our prose has developed so wonderfully within the last half century. The literary language was already in a highly prepared state, so it did not need any great effort to bring our prose to a considerable degree of perfection within a comparatively short time.

The development of poetical literature helping the cause of prose

'The prose metre'

In early times prose was classified in Bengali as a sort of metre. With what justification they called it so is not known; but prose passages are generally found introduced by the word গদ্য ছন্দ. In a poem in praise of Chandidas by the poet Vaisnava Das we find the line—"যাকর নিরমল গদ্য পদ্যময় গীত" which indicates that prose passages also along with the poetic used to be sung or chanted. This is substantiated by the fact that the genealogical accounts of the noble families of the Hindu community in Bengal used to be chanted by *Kulacharyyas*, though a considerable portion of them was written in prose. The *Kathakatas* even in our own day show unmistakably how prose passages may easily lend to the purposes of vocal music. Most probably it was owing to this adaptability of prose to the purposes of song, as found in Bengali, that they called it গদ্য ছন্দ—the prose metre. The authors of early prose used often to include their *bhanita* or signature in the same form as in their poetical compositions. The last lines of the passage from Kamini Kumar, quoted run as follows :—

*"*Kali Krisna Das* (author of the poem Kamini Kumara) *says* that Ram Vallabh in course of time became so clever and practised a hand in the art of preparing tobacco, that he would not wait till his full name was pronounced. As soon as 'Rama' came out of Kamini's lips, Ram Vallabh was ready with his tobacco."

When a whole paragraph was finished the sign of punctuation was ॥; but after the completion of the sentence, the sign generally used was ।.

* "কালীকৃষ্ণ দাস বলে, পশ্চাৎ রামবল্লভের এমনি কল্প হইল যে, কামিনীকে আর পূর্ণ রামবল্লভ বলিতে হয় না, 'রাম' বলিবামাত্রই রামবল্লভ তামাক সাজাইয়া মজুত।"

CHAPTER VII

The Modern Age

I. (a) The epoch ushered in by European workers—civilians and missionnaries.
(b) Dr. Carey and his colleagues.
(c) Bengali works written by Europeans.
(d) A new ideal in the country.

II. (a) The College of Fort William.
(b) The Pundits of the College—Mritunjay—Rama Rama Vasu—Chan ti Charan Munsi—and Rajib Lochan—Their Bengali works.
(c) The Rev. K. M. Banerjee and other authors who followed in the wake of European writers—a list of their publications.

III. General remarks chiefly indicating the characteristics of the new age and its contrast with the earlier one.

IV. (a) Decadance of the high spiritual ideal in Hindu society and the advent of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.
(b) A comprehensive review of his life and work.
(c) The writers that followed Raja Ram Mohan Roy—Devendra Nath Tagore—Aksay Kumar Dutta and others.

1. (*a*) *The new epoch ushered in by European workers,—civilians and missionaries.*

Early prose—of a minor importance.

Whatever remnants of prose we may be able to unearth from old records and manuscripts in order to vindicate the glory of our past literature, it must, for the sake of truth, be admitted that they were too insignificant to deserve prominent mention in a history of literature. Disconnected from the story of the later development of prose, that has grown up like a rich harvest during the British rule, they would scarcely deserve more than a passing notice.

I have said more than once in the foregoing chapters that the heart of Bengal lay in her villages,—contented as these

were with their never-ceasing fountain of domestic and spiritual happiness. Our people did not hitherto care for the world outside the pale of their homes. They worked and sang, prayed, fasted and had visions of God. They heard the bird Kokil coo from the mango boughs in spring, and saw their favourite flower, the lotus, bloom in their tanks in autumn; and blithely did they sing about all these, and about the sweets of home life. They were content with loving their kith and kin, their mothers, wives and children, and thought that God revealed Himself to them in domestic tenderness. They pursued the niceties of logic or indulged in abstruse metaphysical contemplations, and disciplined their mind so that they might take a quiet and ungrudging view of the ills of life and encounter nobly the supreme penalty of nature when in due course they would be called upon to pay it.

Bengalees hitherto content with village-life.

But this village life underwent a sudden disturbance. Political changes were of little importance to the people. They heard from gossips that the *Badsah*, who ruled from the throne of Murshidabad, had been ousted by the English, and that a great battle had been fought at Plassey, but this did not seem at all any important news to them. Now, however, for the first time in history, a sect of people came with the clear object of improving them spiritually and morally. The Mussalmans had not done so,—not even the great Akbar in his dream of a political empire. The Portuguese, the Burmese and the Marathas had all overrun the country during successive ages. They came to loot or judge criminals—restore rights or seize them; that was in the eyes of the Hindus the true function of their foreign rulers. The Mussalmans had come with the Koran, but often with a dagger also, as an alternative to the acceptance of their faith; those that failed to be convinced were sometimes forcibly served with beef and made converts.

But here came a people who showed real anxiety to ameliorate the condition of the people. Bent on high motives

of philanthropy and love, they did not apply force but used gentle persuasion. Besides they showed a great anxiety to give to our countrymen the sort of education which they had not yet had, notwithstanding their higher flights in theology and metaphysics. A class of philanthropic men, whose mission was the propaganda of the great love of their master, Jesus Christ,—the missionaries—in the earlier stages of the British rule did for our country and her literature what we cannot too highly eulogise. They approached with love and so touched the heart of the people. Dr. Carey called us semi-barbarians in a letter to a friend, but he had no contempt for the people; it was a *bonafide* statement which we may very well excuse, when we know that he was truly inspired with the spirit of Christian love for his fellowmen and did not mean to abuse. This love touched the heart of the Bengalees. In fact the ardour, with which the missionaries and even some members of the Civil Service commenced their self-imposed task of educating the masses and ameliorating their condition, elicits our unqualified respect and admiration. The first Bengali types in the country were those employed in printing a Bengali grammar by Mr. Nathaniel Prassey Halhed who was a Civilian and oriental scholar, and "was so well acquainted with the language as sometimes to pass in disguise as a Native."* The grammar was printed in 1778 A.D. in a press at Hooghly. The punches of the fount were prepared by Mr. Wilkins who rose to great distinction as an oriental scholar, and published a translation of the Gita which was the first Sanskrit work made accessible to the scholars of Europe by translation. Mr. Wilkins, who was afterwards decorated with knighthood, belonged to the Service of the East India Company, and in his researches in the field of Sanskrit lore was a recipient of the distinguished patronage of Warren Hastings. Wilkins made it the mission of his life to improve the condition of the

A call from outside.

Halhed's Grammar.

* A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works by J. Long, p. 20.

masses of Bengal by giving them a general education for which printing was essentially necessary. In his zeal to do so, he acquired the art of punch-cutting and prepared a set of Bengali punches with his own hands, after he had been seven years in this country, and in this stage he also trained another hand to do the same work. Panchanan Karmakar and his relation and assistant Manohar Karmakar belonging to the caste of blacksmiths, were instructed in the art of punch-cutting by Mr. Wilkins; and the worry and trouble attending the enterprise for years would have been considered not worth undergoing, had not Mr. Wilkins proceeded with a true Christian spirit of patient philanthrophy. In fact, the amelioration of the condition of the people, amongst whom he was called upon to work, had become the all-absorbing matter of his thought. Through the labours of Panchanan Karmakar and his relative and colleague Manohar the art of punch-cutting became domesticated in India. We do not, however, mean to say that the art of printing in a crude form was not known in Bengal before Charles Wilkins came to the field. We have come across a MS., nearly 200 years old, which was printed from engraved wooden blocks. But the art was not in general use; a stray endeavour for decorative purposes does not prognosticate a system or a regular cultivation of the art, so we may rightly pass over it.

Punches by Wilkins

Panchanan and Manohar.

Crude printing known 200 years ago.

The next notice that we have of printing in Bengali is that of the printed Code of Regulations drawn up by Sir Elija Impey on which all subsequent legislation has been based. The regulations were translated by Mr. Jonathan Duncan, afterwards Governor of Bombay, and were printed at the 'Company's Press' in 1785. The great Cornwallis Code of 1793, translated into Bengali by Mr. Forster, who was in his time the most distinguished European scholar of Bengali, was printed at the same press but from an improved

Early printing

fount, which continued to be the standard of Bengali types, till a neater and a smaller fount was prepared by Dr. Carey.

Next to Sir Charles Wilkins, Nathaniel Prassey Halhed and Graves Chamney Haughton, came a host of European scholars in Bengali and other oriental languages, many of whom belonged to the Sri Ramapur (Serampore) Mission, but none of them was so conspicuous as Dr. Carey in his efforts to improve the resources of Bengali prose or help the circulation of Bengali printing.

Dr. Carey.

(b) *Dr. Carey and his colleagues*

He had started his life as a cobbler. When, however, by his great diligence, piety, scholarship and strength of character he had raised himself to a position of eminence as missionary, he was dining one summer day in 1786 with the Governor General, the Marquis of Hastings, at Barrackpur Park, opposite Serampore and, "overheard one of the guests, a general officer, making enquiry of one of the Aides-de-Camp, whether Dr. Carey had not been a shoemaker, on which he stepped forward and exclaimed, 'No, Sir, only a cobbler!". "Carey might be seen", writes John Clark Marshman, "walking eight or ten miles to Northampton with his wallet full of shoes upon his shoulders and then returning home with a fresh supply of leather to fulfil his engagements with a Government contractor."

This man came subsequently as a missionary to Bengal and felt a true Christian love for the people around him who appeared to him to be sunk in superstition, vice and idolatry. He learnt Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian and Marathi, not with a view to knowing the people or profiting by the wisdom contained in oriental books, but with the object of bringing a large mass of humanity, whom he sincerely believed to be grovelling in darkness, to light. We may regret that Dr. Carey failed to observe the religious life in Bengal which, in spite of superstitions, was permeated with a noble purpose and a spirit of true devotional fervour. But

we can by no means ignore or underestimate the great pains and the indefatigable industry that mark his endeavours to improve lives of the Bengalees by spreading education and by disseminating the truths of the Gospel among them. To him we pre-eminently owe the rapid development of Bengali prose before Raja Ram Mohan Roy took up the work right earnestly.

The difficulties in the way of Dr. Carey were many and great. It was his greatest ambition in life to publish a translation of the Gospel in Bengali. When after years of hard and unremitting labour, he had brought the translation of the New Testament almost to completion, he estimated the cost of printing at Calcutta of 10,000 copies at Rs. 43,750. This was quite beyond his means, and he thought of getting the book printed in England. At first he proposed to obtain punches from Caslon, the eminent letter-founder in London, calculating that the cost of each punch would be 5*s*. only, but he was wrong; the cost of the punches was a guinea a piece. So he gave up the idea of getting the book printed in England, though before doing so he had made another attempt to engage the services of a letter-founder whom he knew at Derby. In 1798 he read an advertisement that a letter-foundry was established for the 'country language' at Calcutta. Dr. Carey lost no time in corresponding with the projector of the scheme, and found that the punches of the foundry were cut by Panchanan, who had been trained by Sir Charles Wilkins. Soon after a printing press constructed of wood was advertised for sale and Dr. Carey immediately purchased it for £40. Panchanan was once more found out and his services engaged by the Sri Ramapur Mission. Here Panchanan completed a fount of 700 separate punches for *Devanagri* letters and their compounds. Panchanan was now an old man, so his worthy colleague Manohar, already mentioned, was called in to assist him and "was subsequently employed for forty years at the Sri Ramapur press and to his exertions and instruction, Bengal is indebted for the various beautiful founts of the Bengali, Nagri,

His efforts to print the Bible.

Persian, Arabic and other characters which have been gradually introduced into the different printing establishments."*

All this was due to the indefatigable industry of Dr. Carey and his colleagues. They were determined to publish the Bible in Bengali, and this Carey was ultimately able to do. Imagine his great delight when on the 18th of March, 1803, Mr. Ward set the first types with his own hands and presented him with the first sheet of the Testament. We find the following account of him in the notice of his career, published by the British and Foreign Bible Society at his death in 1834: "The extent of his zeal may be judged by the fact that, in conjunction with his colleagues, he has been instrumental in giving to the tribes of Asia the sacred scriptures in whole or in part in between 30 and 40 different languages." He acquired Bengali with a thoroughness which we scarcely find in any other foreigner who has studied our language. He had employed *Pandits* to help him to acquire a knowledge of Bengali, and when they declared that he was fit to address the people he commenced preaching; and in 1794 we find him devoted to this task in the jungly tracts of the Sundarbans. He writes on the 16th January, 1798, "I spoke in Bengali for nearly half an hour without an intermission." "But" says he later on "I recollect that after I had preached or rather thought that I had, for two years (in Bengali), a man one day came to me and declared that he could not understand me, and this long after my flattering teachers had declared that every one could understand me. I feel the impression which that poor man's remark made on me to this day."†

He acquires Bengali

But we presume that it was his peculiarity of accent in pronouncing the letters ড, ঢ, etc. which must have made his speech some times unintelligible to the people. Reading his Bengali works on various subjects, one is struck with his wonderful command over the idiom and colloquial forms of our dialect, so

* History of Sri Ramapur Mission, Vol. I., p. 179.

† Memoir of Dr. Carey by Eustace Carey, p. 503.

difficult for a foreigner to acquire. Dr Carey was not, however, the man to be daunted by failures. He composed a short and simple marriage service in Bengali for meeting the growing demand of such formulæ, as there was already a good number of Bengali Christians, whose marriage ceremonies were to be celebrated according to new rites for which there was yet no guide in the vernacular. He besides composed songs in Bengali and we find one of his friends writing about himself and Dr. Carey: "This morning brother Carey and I took our stand like two ballad-singers and began singing in Bengali before one of Siva's temples."* Of course now-a-days a European missionary singing a Bengali song is no strange spectacle in this country; but Carey was the pioneer in all such matters and he was inspired by a real zeal to bring the people who, according to his notions, erred in religion, to the creed which he considered to be the only true one; and Hindus have always judged of a people by the sincerity of their faith and not by the loftiness of their doctrines, of which their own *Sastras* furnish sufficiently great and noble examples. Before these sincere souls took up the task of propagating their religious faith "there had been no indication that the conquerors of Bengal possessed any religion at all, excepting the hoisting of the flag on Sundays and the official attendance of the few at the Sunday morning service" and it was the earnest endeavour of Carey, Marshman, Martyn and their colleagues to remove this impression. They spared no pains to bring the lost sheep to the fold. In the Sundarbans Dr. Carey lost a son, but he could induce no person, not even a Muhammadan, to make a coffin, and the distress, to which he and his wife were put, can hardly be adequately described. All this he underwent with a patient and a glad heart, because though the people opposed him, he wanted to do good to them,—to return good for evil, as the great master had enjoined upon all the true followers of his creed. The great love attracted the

The result of self-sacrifice

* Memoir, p. 129.

people and all difficulties, all problems—however insurmountable or intricate—are overcome by love. The best men of the land during the first epoch of the British rule were drawn to Christianity by the noble examples of philanthropic love displayed by the Christian missionaries. They were not attracted by the inherent qualities of Christianity so much as by the examples of suffering for love before them. It was owing to these traits of disinterestedness in the life of early missionaries that men like the Rev. K. M. Banerjee, the Rev. Lal Behari De, Michael Madhu Sudan Datta, Govinda Chandra Datta and last though not the least of this glorious band, Dr. K. C. Banerjee had embraced Christianity. For nearly a century the enlightened Hindus were dazzled by the glare of western civilisation, and showed no inclination to admit that anything could have been noble or great in the past in their own nation. The great personality of Chaitanya Deva and his heavenly love, the poems of Chandidas and the lays of other Vaisnava poets, the songs of Rama Prasad, the vivid and noble portraitures of domestic life found in Kavi Kankan's poems and the exquisite touches and elegance of Bharat Chandra's style could now command no attention from the educated young men of Bengal ; in fact, Bengal with her wealth of noble ideas lay far off, though so near; and Europe, removed from us by land and sea, came nearer and nearer to the new generation of the Hindus who came in touch with the missionaries. In the domestic circle the parents became anxious for children who under the spell of missionary influence failed even to admire the patient and self-sacrificing love for religion which had marked the Hindu women of the past, and revolted against all that was old and had been sacred in popular estimation. The gods had now become to them mere clay, the temples were unholy and the hallowed precincts of their homes a hole of superstition. Their noble literature was no more than a miserable scribbling and shreds of paper which they should consign to the fire or to worms. The songs of Radha and Krisna which were expressed in the highest language of

Young men of Bengal anglicised.

poetry, and were hitherto a fountain of joy and inspiration to the rich and the poor alike, now became a source of horror to them; and one of our greatest countrymen of that age was known to declare that Krisna, the supreme soul, was worse than a sweeper. The Hindu shrines had once been desecrated by Muhammadans who had thrown beef and other unholy things into them to destroy their sanctity; but they had only half succeeded, for thousands of hearts had remained true to them. But now our own people the educated classes, lost faith in the temples, and looked upon them as pandemoniums and the gods enshrined in them as Beelzebubs and Molochs, whether they believed in Christianity or not. The victory of the missionaries was complete. The secret of their success, I beg to repeat, lay in the circumstance of their approaching us with love. They had shown a system of organised philanthropy hitherto unknown to the country. Their charity, devotion, zeal and sympathy had drawn away those who were the natural ornaments of our society, and poor Bengal may consider this love to have been the greatest of her disasters, since more than the sword it upset time-honoured hoary institutions and alienated true hearts.

True love never spends itself in a single channel. Dr. Carey and his colleagues did not consider their work done by merely propagating the truths of Christianity. They wanted sincerely to give our countrymen education, according to their own standards, in all departments of knowledge; and the wonderful activity displayed by them in their labour of love draws forth our greatest admiration when we consider that the Government of the East India Company, afraid of disturbing the conservative views of our people did not assist but often obstructed them in the earlier stages. There is not a subject on which these Europeans did not come forward to write books in Bengali in order to spread education among the masses.

Dr. Carey's Bengali works.

Dr. Carey wrote the following books in Bengali, besides numerous treatises on Christianity and the translation of the Bible:

1. A Dictionary of the Bengali language in three volumes, quarto size, containing 80,000 words—the work of thirty years. The original price was Rs. 120. This book came out in 1815—25.

2. A Bengali Grammar published in 1801. It passed through four editions before 1855.

3. Kathopakathan or Colloquies, published in August, 1801.

4. Itihasamala, or garland of stories, published in 1812. It contains 150 short stories at that time current in Bengal.

The last two books form a rich mine of idioms of the spoken dialect of Bengal from which Tek Chand Thakur took the cue for his style in the composition of his masterpiece in Bengali—the Alaler Gharer Dulal. Dr. Carey writes in the preface to his Kathopakathan: "That the work might be as complete as possible, I have employed some sensible natives to compose dialogues upon subjects of domestic nature and to give them precisely in the natural style of the persons supposed to be speakers." So he did not write the whole of the book himself, but the dialogues, other than those written on domestic subjects, are his composition, and they do him a great credit. He had a high regard for Bengali as a language. He says of it in the aforesaid preface, "This language...current through an extent of country nearly equal to Great Britain...when properly cultivated, will be inferior to none in elegance and perspicuity." He wanted not only to educate and elevate the masses of Bengal, but also to develop, as best he could the resources of a language for which he had a great respect. The style of his colloquies inspired many of our countrymen to write in the current dialect, and not only do we find it imitated in a pre-eminent degree in Alaler Gharer Dulal and Hutum Pechar Naksa, but even in the style of a Bankim Chandra and Dina Bandhu Mitra. I quote a passage from his colloquies. Dr. Carey appended an English translation which I adopt with some modifications.

Specimens of colloquial style.

*"Yesterday at 12 o'clock my youngest wife had cooked the dinner, and my children had first eaten their rice. At that moment the middle woman came in and set up a quarrel."

"None of the women of your house can bear to see any good happening to another,"

"What can I say? There is no place where I can go and stay for four or five days, and allow the breeze to blow on my face (enjoy peace)."

"Why don't you go to your brothers' house and stay there for a few days?"

"What, go to their house! If I were to go to their house, do you think I should be preserved from these abusive women? There is not one of them who can bear to hear of my brothers. My husband scarcely stays at home at all, on account of their quarrels. When he does come, he himself abuses and scolds."

"Formerly you lived on such good terms. Strange, you are always differing now."

"If I could only give my daughters in marriage, I would take seven mustard seeds and bathe (an idiom in Bengali signifying great relief of mind). I would offer betel to Kulai Chandi and send *puja* to Suvachani."

* "কাল দুপুর বেলা ছোট বৌ রাঁধিতেছিল, ইহার মধ্যে আমার ছালা আগে ভাত খাইয়াছিল, ইহার মধ্যে মাঝা মাগী আসিয়া দ্বন্দ্ব আরম্ভ করিল।"

"তোরগো বাড়ীর মায়াগুলা কেহ কারু ভাল দেখিতে পারে না।"

* "কি করিব, এমন ঠাঁই নাই যে সেখানে গিয়া থাকিলে দশ পাঁচ দিন গায় বাতাস লাগে।"

"কেন? তোর ভাইদের বাড়ী দিন কতক যা না কেন?"

"তাদের বাড়ী যাব কি? তাহা হইলে ভাইখাগীদের কাছে রক্ষা আছে? আমাদের ভাইদের নাম শুনতে পারে না কেউ। কর্ত্তা যিনি তিনি দ্বন্দ্ব ডাকাডাকির জন্য বাড়ী প্রায় থাকেন না। যখন আইসেন তখন গালাগালি তিরস্কার করেন।"

"তোদের সংসারে এমন ঐক্য ছিল, এখন এমন অনৈক্য হইয়াছে।"

"মাঝা দুটার বিয়া দিতে পারিলে আমি সাতটা শরিষা দিয়া স্নান করি, কুলাই চণ্ডীর বাড়ী গুয়া পান দিই, সুবচনী পূজা করি, মনস্কামনা সিদ্ধ করিলে হয়।"

"Where do you think of marrying your girls? In the country or outside it?"

"I cannot say what God intends. I think it would be well to marry them near home."

"What do all the brothers' wives say? What say the uncles and aunts? What all agree upon is proper."

"As it happens I will go home; if the evening comes I shall be scolded."

The colloquy under the head "Quarrels of Women" beginning with "Where have you been, gossip? Is none of the business of the evening in your mind?" presents to us a disagreeable scene, which, assuming that some *pandit* wrote it for Dr. Carey, though he himself appends an English translation, should not, for the sake of decency, have found a place in a missionary's book. We find slang of a most revolting type used freely in that dialogue and we wonder how Dr. Carey could have published it in his own name. This goes to show that even a European missionary of such spotless reputation as Dr. Carey's was could not escape from that corrupt taste of the age which marks the writing of Iswar Gupta and Gauri Sankar Bhattacharyya.

We quote below two more extracts from Dr. Carey's Bengali writings, which will illustrate his great command over the language. I take both of them from his Itihasamala or Garland of Stories.

ম্যাহার বিবাহ কোথায় ঠাওর হইয়াছে? দেশের মধ্যে না বিদেশে দিবা?

"ঈশ্বরের মনে কি আছে বুঝতে পারি না; আমার ইচ্ছা দেশের মধ্যে হইলেই ভাল হয়।"

"তোমার যায়া সকলে কি বলে? ম্যাহার মামা, মামী কি বলে? পাঁচটার যে মত সেই কর্ত্তব্য।"

"সে যেই হউক, আমি বাড়ী যাই, বেলা গেলে এখনই গালাগালি দিবে।"

I. *** Once upon a time a thief was running away with the articles stolen from a house, and was passing by the fields adjoining the village. A ploughman, who happened to see him, said, 'Would you mind returning those things to the rightful owner? If you do not, I shall have you punished in the court of the king.' The thief replied, 'Mind your own business, fool. If you show any undue enthusiasm in this matter I shall make you suffer capital punishment at the hands of the king.' The ploughman, who was naturally very angry at the audacity of the thief, caught hold of him with the stolen articles and brought him before the king to whom he related the whole story. When the king asked the thief what he had to say in reply, he answered: 'Great king, I saw that this man was sitting with these articles in a jungle: I told him that he looked like a thief and threatened to bring him before your majesty, if he would not return the articles to the owner. But the man abused me for saying so. Be pleased to judge this thief as he deserves.' The king asked if there was any eye-witness to substantiate the statement of either; but both of them declared that there was none. The king ordered his officers to take away both of them, and after tightly binding each to a corpse, to burn them at separate places. He desired, moreover, that his order should be quickly executed. After publicly passing

The story of a thief.

* "এক চোর কোন গৃহস্থের কতকগুলি দ্রব্য চুরি করিয়া গ্রামোপান্তে যাইতেছিল; সেই সময়ে এক কৃষক তাহাকে দেখিয়া কহিল, 'তুই যে লোকের দ্রব্যাদি লইয়া যাইতেছিস্ তাহাকে ফিরিয়া দে, নতুবা রাজ নিকটে দণ্ড হইবে।' চোর উত্তর করিল, তুই আপনার কর্ম্ম কর, অতিরিক্ত কহিলে রাজার অগ্রে তোর প্রাণদণ্ড হইবে।' কৃষক ইহা শুনিয়া ক্রুদ্ধ হইয়া দ্রব্যের সহিত চোরকে ধরিয়া রাজার সমীপে সমস্ত গিয়া নিবেদন করিল। অনন্তর নৃপতি চোরকে আসিয়া জিজ্ঞাসা করিলে, সে উত্তর করিল, 'হে মহারাজ আমি দেখিলাম যে এই লোকে ঐ সকল দ্রব্য লইয়া বন মধ্যে বসিয়া রহিয়াছে। তাহাতে আমি কহিলাম যে তুমি চোর হইবা। যাহার দ্রব্য আনিয়াছ তাহাকে দিয়া আইস, নতুবা তোমাকে মহারাজের নিকট লইয়া যাইব। তাহাতে ইনি আমাকে কটুবাক্য কহিলে, আমি ইহাকে এখানে ধরিয়া আনিলাম। ইহার বিচার করিতে আজ্ঞা হউক।' অনন্তর রাজা কহিলেন, 'উহার কেহ সাক্ষী আছে?' তাহাতে উত্তরে কহিলা 'সাক্ষী কেহ নাই।' অনন্তর ভূপতি ভৃত্যের দিগকে আজ্ঞা করিলেন, যে এই দুই জনকে লইয়া নদী তীরে দুই শবের সহিত পৃথক পৃথক

this sentence, he brought the officers into his private chamber, and instructed them to keep a secret watch upon these men after they had been bound to the corpses as directed. They were instructed to listen to the conversation of the two and report it to him at once. The officers accordingly took the two men to the river side, where they bound them to two different corpses; and on the pretext of going away to bring fuel for burning them, hid themselves close by, so that they could overhear without being seen. The two men thinking they were left to themselves, now felt sure that death was inevitable, upon which the ploughman said to the thief, 'Well, thief, you are a remarkably clever fellow, you have succeeded in bringing death and ruin upon me though I am innocent.' The thief said in reply, 'I begged you not to adopt the course you took, saying that if you quarrelled with me your life would pay the forfeit. For my part, I am a thief, and death is just the punishment that I deserve. But you are going to lose your life out of sheer foolishness.' The officers overheard the conversation and at once reported to the king who, on knowing the facts, inflicted a suitable punishment on the thief and duly rewarded the ploughman."

How 23 fish disappeared.

11. "* A husbandman went with his plough to the fields one day, and got 24 fish from a neighbouring canal. He came back to his home and, after

দাহ কর, ইহাতে বিলম্ব না হয়। পশ্চাৎ নির্জ্জনে ঐ দাসের দিগকে ডাকিয়া কহিলেন 'ঐ দুইজনকে দুই শবের সহিত পৃথক পৃথক বন্ধন করিয়া গুপ্তবেশে নিকটে থাকিয়া উভয়ের কথোপকথন শুনিয়া আমাকে কহিবা।' পরে দাসেরা সেই দুই লোককে নদীতীরে শবের সহিত বন্ধন করিয়া কাষ্ঠাদি আনিতে যাই, ইহা কহিয়া অস্পষ্টরূপে নিকটে থাকিল, তাহাতে ঐ দুই ব্যক্তি আপন মরণ নিশ্চয় বুঝিয়া কৃষাণ চোরকে কহিল যে 'হে চোর তুই এতবড় বুদ্ধিমান, বিনাপরাধে আমার প্রাণদণ্ড করিলি!' ইহাতে সে প্রত্যুত্তর করিল 'আমি পূর্ব্বে তোমাকে বারণ করিয়াছিলাম যে আমার সহিত বিবাদ করিলে তোমার প্রাণ যাইবে, আমি চোর, আমার মৃত্যু অবধারিত আছে। তুমি না বুঝিয়া প্রাণ হারাইয়াছ।' রাজ-ভৃত্যেরা এই কথোপকথন শুনিয়া রাজ সমীপে সমুদায় কহিল। রাজা সমস্ত বৃত্তান্ত অবগত হইয়া চোরকে উপযুক্ত দণ্ড করিয়া কৃষককে তুষ্ট করিয়া বিদায় দিলেন।"

* এক কৃষক লাঙ্গল চষিতে গিয়া কোন খানে গোটা চব্বিশেক মৎস্য ধরিয়া গৃহে আনিয়া আপন গৃহিণীকে পাক করিতে দিয়া আপনি পুনর্ব্বার চষিতে গেল।

having made over the fish to his wife for cooking, returned to his duties. His wife prepared a curry with the fish and wanting to know the taste of her preparation took a sip from it. She found that it tasted well, and then she thought, 'But I don't know how the fish tastes; let me eat one.' So she ate a fish, and then she thought 'But still I do not know how that one on the dish would taste', and she ate the second fish also. In this manner she proceeded till she had finished all but one; and when her husband came home, she presented him with a dish of rice and a single fish. The husbandman wondering said, 'what is the matter? I got 24 fish; what about the rest?' His wife gave him the following account of the fish."

"You brought 24 fish. A kite fell upon them and took away eight; sixteen remained.

"I took them to the tank for washing and eight swam away in the water; eight remained.

"I got two bundles of fuel in exchange of two fish.

"Your good neighbours ought to have a share.

"I presented them with four; and then only two remained.

তাহার গৃহিণী সে মৎস্য কয়টী পাক করিয়া মনে বিবেচনা করিল, যে মৎস্য পাক করিলাম কিন্তু কি প্রকার হইয়াছে চাখিয়া দেখি। ইহা ভাবিয়া কিঞ্চিৎ ঝোল লইয়া খাইয়া দেখিল যে ঝোল সরস হইয়াছে। পরে পুনর্ব্বার মনে ভাবিল মৎস্য কিরূপ হইয়াছে, তাহাও চাখিয়া দেখি, ইহা ভাবিয়া একটা মৎস্য খাইল। পুনর্ব্বার চিন্তা করিল ওটী কিরূপ হইয়াছে, তাহাও চাখিতে হয়; ভাবিয়া সেটীও খাইল। এইরূপে খাইতে খাইতে একটীমাত্র অবশিষ্ট রহিল। পরে কৃষক ক্ষেত্র হইতে বাটী আইলে তাহার গৃহিণী সেই মৎস্যটী আর অন্ন তাহাকে দিলে, কৃষক কহিল যে 'একি? চব্বিশটী মৎস্য আনিয়াছি, আর কি হইল?' তখন তাহার স্ত্রী মৎস্যের হিসাব দিল।

"মাছ আনিলা ছয় গণ্ডা,
চিলে নিল দুই গণ্ডা,
বাকী রইল ষোল।
তাহা ধু'তে আটটা জলে পলাইল॥
তবে থাকিল আট।
দুইটায় কিনিলাম দুই আটি কাঠ॥
তবে থাকিল ছয়।
প্রতিবাসীকে চারিটা দিতে হয়॥

"I ate one to see how it tastes; there remained only one.

"Look for that on the dish.

"If you are a true man eat the bone and keep the flesh (for me).

"Because you have got such a wife as myself, you are furnished with a true account."

The above two extracts illustrate the easy and simple style which is to be found in some of the text-books compiled for the college of Fort William in which Dr. Carey taught the Bengali, Hindusthani, and Marathi languages. He not only contributed very considerably himself to Bengali prose literature, but always befriended those who took good vernacular work in hand. For instance we find that Thakur's Bengali and English Dictionary, an admirable work of scholarship, was compiled for the Fort William College in 1805 at the suggestion of Dr. Carey. He employed Rama Rama Vasu and Rajib Lochan to write Pratapaditya Charit and Krisna Chandra Charita respectively, the former of which appeared in 1801, and the latter in 1805.

A friend of Bengali writers

Thus lived Dr. Carey in Bengal from 1793 when he first landed here till his death in 1834—one of those rare spirits who, crossing the barriers of their national prejudices, by dint of that all-embracing brotherhood which every true Christian should feel for all men, worked without a thought of reward or personal aggrandisement. He and his colleague, Mr. J. Marshman, had nothing to bequeath to their children at death, but enough as heritage to the suffering race

His colleagues

তবে থাকিল দুই।
তার একটা চাখিয়া দেখিলাম মুঁই॥
তবে থাকিল এক।
ঐ পাতপানে চাহিয়ে দেখ॥
এখন হইস যদি মাগের পো।
তবে কাঁটাখান খাইয়া মাছখান খো॥
আমি যেই মেয়ে।
তেঁই হিসাব দিলাম ক'য়ে॥"

whose cause they had espoused, not under obligation or extraneous mandate, but according to the dictates of their own consciences through which their God spoke to them. Amongst his other colleagues the names of Yates, W. Morton (of whom the Rev. J. Long says 'He is one of the ablest Bengali scholars ever produced in the country'), and the Rev. J. Pearson deserve a special mention as having greatly furthered the cause of our prose literature.

(c) *Bengali works written by Europeans*

The works written in the vernacular language about this time by European writers cover a vast field. We cannot name all of them. We confine ourselves to the following list of works, and our list even here is not exhaustive as we have not included those that deal with Christianity. There is a great literature of translations of the Bible and treatises on Christianity which we cannot undertake to dwell upon at present. The list below is mainly based on the catalogue on vernacular works compiled by the Rev. J. Long in 1855. Most of these works were, no doubt, written for educational purposes.

Arithmetic

1. Smith's zemindary papers, printed at the Sri Ramapore press in 1817.

2. Mr. May's Arithmetical Table selected from those employed in the native schools. It was published in 1817 and called May-Ganita.

3. Harley's Arithmetic—Ganitanka. First Edition appeared from Chinsurah in 1819.

Dictionary

1. Bengali Dictionary by Forster,—Civilian and Sanskrit Scholar. It contains 18000 words. Published in 1819 in two volumes. Price Rs. 60.

2. Miller's Bengali Dictionary, published in 1801, Price Rs. 32.

3. Haughton's Glossary, published in 1825.

4. Haughton's Bengali-to-English Dictionary, published at the expense of the Court of Directors in 1833. It contains 40,000 words. Price Rs. 80.

5. Marshman's Bengali Dictionary. Published in 1827,—25,000 words.

6. Marshman's Bengali and English Dictionary, published in 1829. Price Rs. 10.

7. Rev. J. Pearson's School Dictionary, published in 1829.

8. Morton's Dictionary. 600 pages, Quarto size. Published in 1828. Price Rs. 6.

9. Mendie's Abridgement of Johnson's Dictionary (Bengali and English). First edition appeared in 1822.

10. Rozario's Dictionary—1837. Price Rs. 6.

Ethics and moral tales

1. Dr. Gilchrist's Bengali translation of Æsop's Fables—in 1803.

2. Upadesakatha or moral tales by Stewart—in 1820.

3. Sadguna-o-Viryya (95 anecdotes illustrating virtue and valour). Price Re. 1-8 as. Compiled by a Serampore Missionary in 1829.

4. Æsop's Fables translated by Marshman.

5. Hitopadesa by Yates. Published in 1841.

6. Parasika Itihas by Kneane.

Geography

1. Bhugol Evam Jyotis (dialogues on Geography and Astronomy) by Pearson. Published in 1824.

2. A Map of the world in Bengali by G. Herklotts (1825).

3. J. Sutherland's Geography of India.

4. Pearce's Bhugol Vrittanta (Geography)— in 1818.

5. Sandy's General Geography in Bengali—in 1842.

Grammar

1. Halhed's Bengali Grammar—in 1778.

2. Carey's Grammar—in 1801.

3. Murray's English Grammar translated into Bengali by Rev. J. Pearson—in 1820.

4. Sir C. Haughton's Grammar. Price Rs. 15. Published in 1821.

5. J. Robinson's Bengali Grammar (a translation of Carey's Anglo-Bengali Grammar). Pages 109.

6. Keat's Bengali Grammar (Ket-Vyakarana). Published in 1820. Pages 59. Price 2 as. From 1820-1854 upwards of 15,000 copies were sold.

7. Wenger's Bengali Grammar. Pages 156. Price Re. 1-4 as.

History and Biography

1. Goldsmith's History of England translated into Bengali by Felix Carey in 1819. Pages 412.

2. Captain Stewart's Moral tales of History with selections of historical subjects such as—glimpses of the early days of England, with moral instruction, historical anecdotes—illustrative of friendship, industry, justice, pride, anger; the arrival of the English in India, the Rules of the Permanent Settlement.

3. Itihas Samuchaya or Epitome of ancient history by Pearson. Pages 364. Price Re. 1. This book gives an account of the history of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medea, Persia, Greece and Rome.

4. Prachin Itihas by Pearson. Published in 1839. Pages 623, compiled from Rollin and Anquetel: it gives a brief account of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Grecians, Romans, treating of manners, customs, buildings, natural productions, laws, Government and history of those States.

5. Vanga Desa Puravritta translated from Marshman's History by Wenger. Pages 284.

6. Dharma Pustaka Vrittanta by Mrs. Hæberlin. Published in 1846. Pages 252 with 27 woodcuts.

7. Kala Kramika Itihas by G. Pearce, published in 1838. Pages 89 with 10 woodcuts.

8. Daniel Charita by Morton. Pages 345 ;—in 1836.

9. Puravritta Samksepa by J. Marshman ;—1833. Pages 515. Price Rs. 3.

10. Bharatvarsiya Itihas by J. Marshman. Two Volumes, 1831. Price Rs. 8.

11. Tucker's History of the Jews translated into Bengali by J. Kempbell. Pages 257. 1845.

12. Muhammad Jiban Charit by Rev. J. Long. Pages 121. Founded exclusively on Arabic authorities as given in the works of Sprenger, Welie, and Caussin de Percival—treats of Geography, Natural History and religious state of Arabia previous to Mahammad's time, Mahammad's youthful days, his trading, when 40 years old he announces a new faith, opposition of his relatives, becomes a warrior, his polygamy, messages to foreign rulers, regulations for his followers: death in the midst of his plans. "The second part now in the press will take in the spread of Moslemism, the Koran, Moslemism as at present, the festivals and sects of the Muhommedans."

Medicine

1. Carey's Bengali Anatomy (Haravali Vidya). Pages 638. Price Rs. 6. Published from the Serampore Press in 1820. Designed in 1818 to form the first part of a Bengali Encyclopædia, to consist chiefly of translation of 'esteemed compendiums of European art and science.'

2. Bachelor's Medical Guide. Pages 358. Price Re. 1.

Mensuration

1. Robinson's Bengali Mensuration (Bhumi Parimana)—1850. The author was an Inspector of Government Schools in Assam and the neighbouring districts. This work gives the elements of land-surveying and rules for finding the areas of 16 plain figures. 'It contains 10 problems—to find the area of a square, of a rectangular parallelogram: an oblique-angled parallelogram, a trapezium, a circle, ellipse, two sides of right-angled triangle, a triangle, a right-angled triangle.'

Readers

1. Yule's Spelling Book—Sisu Bodhoday. A spelling book with short sentences and verses for reading.

2. Haughton's Selections, containing 10 stories from the Tota Itihas, 4 from the Vatris Simhasan and 4 from the Puru's Pariksa. Published in 1822. Price Rs. 10.

3. Ksetra Bhagan Vivaran or Agri-horticultural Transactions by J. Marshman, pages 730. Published in 1831 in two volumes.

4. Sisu Siksa or Object Lessons by J. Weitbrecht in 1852.

5. Prasnavali by the Rev. J. Long. This book contains questions on the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, taken from objects in this country—designed to call forth the curiosity of the young people, and show them the wonders existing in common objects around them.

Natural Philosophy

1. Padartha Vidya Sara or Natural Philosophy and History by Yates, compiled from Martinet's Catechism of Nature, William's Preceptor's Assistance and Bayley's Useful Knowledge, designed as an easy entrance to the path of science—treats of the properties of matter—the firmament and heavenly bodies, air, wind, vapour, rain, earth, man, animals, birds, fishes, insects, worms, plants, flowers, grass, grain, minerals and miscellaneous productions. Published in 1825.

2. Yate's Padartha Vidya, 1824. Pages 91.

3. Kimiya Vidya Sara or Chemistry by Mack, pages 337. Price Rs. 2-8 as.—Treats of Chemical forces, Calorie, Light, Electricity, Chemical substances, Oxygen, Chloride, Bromine, Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Sulphur, Phosphorus, Carbon, Boron, Selenium, the steam engine.

Miscellaneous

1. Rev. A. Pearson's Pathsala Vivaran—a translation of the more important part of Dr. Bell's instruction for modelling and conducting schools. Published from Chinsura in 1819.

2. Patra Kaumudi, composed by the Rev. J. Pearson, contains 286 letters on familiar subjects, commercial and familiar correspondence, forms of leases, zemindary accounts and other forms in common use. First edition 1819, sixth edition 1852 ; 8,500 copies sold within this period.

3. Pathavali by the Rev. J. Long—extracts chiefly from native works, on the life of a shepherd astronomer, Punjab salt mines, silk worms, Moslem saints, frog in a tone, printing the wonderful veil, the transparent watch, the tower of Pandua, ghata-murders, steam engines, engines, women devoted to Christ, a wonderful spring, the gold and silver of Scripture, balloons, Ram Mohan Roy, productions of India-tin, lead and copper of Scripture, human body, Siamese twins, breathing, sagacity of elephants, etc.

4. Samvad Sara or selections from the native press by the Rev. J. Long, 1853. Pages 198. Price 6 as.

5. Yate's Prose Selections, Vol. I, 1847. Pages 428. Price Rs. 5.

6. Prose Selections from Bengali Literature by Yates, Vol. II, Octavo size, pages 407 ; gives 18 tales of a parrot, 9 letters from the Lipimala, 14 stories from Vatris Sinhasan, notices of Indian kings from the Rajavali, the History of Raja Krisna Chandra Ray of Krishnagar, 16 moral tales from the Purusa Pariksa, 5 chapters of the Hitopadesa, 9 moral essays from the Jnana Chandrika and 9 from the Jnanarnava, 4th chapter of the Prabodha Chandrika, chapters against idolatry from the Tattva Prakasa, History of Nala from the Mahabharata, specimens of Ram Mohan Roy's hymns, selections from two native newspapers.

7. Vakyavali—Idiomatical exercises by J. Pearson, pages 294. Price Re. 1. A phrase-book with examples of words alphabetically arranged ; "very useful for either natives wishing to learn colloquial English idoms or Europeans wishing to know Bengali dialogues." Forms of letters and notes ; appeared in 1819.

8. Sara Sangraha by Yates, 1845.

We have quite a large number of Law books translated into Bengali by European writers. Forster's translation of the Regulations of 1793, a work of about 400 pages,—is a curiosity both as to style and typography. We have besides the Regulations of 1802-1809, pages 504, translated by Turnbull and Sutherland; Ditto. 1816-1821 by Wynch; the Navavidhan or abstract of miscellaneous Regulations of 1793-1824; Dewani Ain Sar and Raj Samparkiya Ain (in two volumes) by Marshman and many other works of this nature.

9. In 1818, a Bengali Encyclopædia was commenced at Serampore, but only one part, Carey's Anatomy, was completed. In 1828, the society for translating European sciences with H. Wilson as president started the Vijnana Sevadhi, a serial on the plan of the Library of useful knowledge. It reached 15 numbers embracing Indian Geography, Hydrostatics, Mechanics, Optics, Pneumatics and Brougham's discourse on the advantage of Science.

10. Virgil's Æneid. First book translated into Bengali by J. Serjeant, a Civilian and a student of Fort William College, pages 65; it came out in 1805.

11. Shakespeare's Tempest, translated into Bengali by Monckton, a student of the Fort William College.

12. First Part, Robinson Crusoe. Pages 261. Translated into plain Bengali by the Rev. J. Robinson, illustrated by 18 wood-cuts. A second edition was published in 1855.

13. Pilgrim's Progress, translated into Bengali in two volumes by Felix Carey.

14. Gladwin's Pleasant Stories, translated into Bengali by George Gallowway in 1840.

15. Mylius' School Dictionary, translated by J. Lavandier.

16. History of a Lion.

17. Life of Fatik Chand by the Rev. J. Lawson.

18. Madhu's Conversation by the Rev. W. Morton.

19. Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, translated by Dr. Roer.

20. Memoir of Pitambar Sing by the Rev. W. Ward.

Newspapers and Magazines.

On the 31st of May, 1818, the first newspaper ever printed in any oriental language, was issued from the Seramapore Press; it was called the Samachara Darpana or the 'Mirror of News.' It was started jointly by Dr. Marshman and Dr. Ward.

In February 1818, Dr. Marshman published the Dikdarsan, a monthly journal, in which amongst other subjects, there was an account of Raja Krisna Chandra of Nadia.

The Satya Pradipa by Mr. Townsend,—started in 1850, was a most useful paper; it gave a *precis* of news, correspondence, wood-cuts with descriptions of objects in art and nature.

The above list shows that the European writers, chiefly missionaries, were the pioneers in all departments of vernacular-writing which grew into favour with the awakening of Hindu intelligence under British rule. Every subject, from the principles of Arithmetic, Botany, Astronomy, Anatomy, Chemistry down to Law, is comprised in this list. The extraordinary energy displayed by foreign writers in mastering the idioms and technicalities of our language, and dealing with such widely divergent subjects, is a sure proof of the earnestness of their philanthropic mission. The writer of the present treatise can hardly refrain from giving expression to his gratitude, while reviewing these works, for the impetus given by them to the Bengali mind in acquiring the knowledge so essential for the needs of modern civilisation. They laid the foundations upon which the vast fabric of our present-day literature is based—a literature which, though necessarily lacking in originality, chiefly consisting as it does of translations and compilations, promises to rise to universal esteem under favourable circumstances when it shall have passed its noviciate in acquiring all that it can assimilate from the vast resources of occidental learning.

The impetus given by European writers.

(*d*) *A New Ideal in the country*

In the chapter on the Puranic Renaissance, we noticed how mythological stories, fraught with a spirit of noble martyrdom and sacrifice, had elevated the minds of the people, and helped in spiritualising them. The Puranic revivalists had held the earliest torch to enlighten our masses after Buddhism had declined in the country. The efforts of the missionaries and European scholars in giving culture through the medium of Bengali, now again after a lapse of 700 years, served to awaken the Bengalee mind to the consciousness of new ideas, the ideas of western civilisation.

Contact with the West.

It was as if home stayers of Bengal had suddenly left the precints of home and launched out into the wide world. Hitherto the highest and noblest ideas that had inspired the Hindu mind in Bengal had drawn their impetus from home and from domestic life. Obedience to parents, loyalty to husband, devotion to brothers and sacrifices to be undergone for guests, servants and relations, had all been elevated to the highest virtues, and the *Puranas* had supplied inexhaustible examples, illustrating each of these qualities. Rama who left the throne and became an ascetic, and Bhisma, who took the vow of celibacy, foregoing his rightful claims to the throne of Indraprastha, typify the highest example of filial obedience. Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Sakuntala and Behula in the past and hundreds of those in the later age who courted death on the funeral pyre of their husbands, showed that the ideal of nuptial duties in this land was capable of raising women to the highest martyrdom. Hanuman typifies devotion to a master, and Ekalavya, to the religious preceptor. The home was the great sanctuary where sacrifices and martyrdoms were to be undergone for the sake of those sacred ties which bind one to it; and this would, according to the notion of the Hindus, infallibly lead him to a realisation of the supreme duty which a man owes to God,—culminating in a glorious renunciation of home for the good

The past ideal.

of the soul and the world. Indeed, in a place where a joint and undivided family system required a man to live and eat together with all his near kinsmen, it would be impossible to live in harmony without elevating the domestic duties into the highest virtues. Hence no other nation has ever given so high a value to domestic duties, identifying them so closely with the spiritual.

The literature of a race inspired with such ideas has a unique value. Its scope may be comparatively small, but within its own narrow limits, it is deeper and purer than one could expect from a literature covering a wider range. The Bengali literature of the past had been reserved for the Bengalees alone; a fact which gives it an original character, displaying the subtle turns of the intellectual and spiritual qualities of the race; and one, who may feel interested in studying our national ideas and aspirations, would do well to read this ancient literature, which, for a century after the English conquest, lay neglected and uncared for,—consigned to the care of the Batatala publishing agencies of Calcutta.

The old and the new.

From the home to the world—it was a descent from the Himalayas to the plains,—from the lofty spiritual idea permeating the Hindu home,—the visions of the beatitude which it was the dream of every great Hindu to attain,—to the matter-of-fact world and to an observation of things that are taking shape and changing all around;—from the great example of Bhisma and Rama—cherished in the heart of every Hindu—the loftiest like the loftiest peak of the Himalayas,—to the stories of Duval's assiduity in learning, and Sir Philiph Sydney's offering his cup of water to the dying soldier;—from the pursuit and acquisition of *Yoga* to the knowledge of Geographical catechism,—to be able to point out Popocatapetl on a map of the globe,—from the celestial songs of Radha and Krisna, which, while gratifying all our yearnings for the loftiest of human love, have kept a door constantly open heaven wards,—to the stories of Paul and Virginia or of Æneas and Dido,—the descent is as great as one

from the Himalayas to the plains. But a race of people confined within the narrow grooves of their own thoughts were dragged out to observe the wonders of the world, of which they had hitherto known nothing, nor cared to know,—nipping in the bud all curiosity about the material world by fabrication of monstrous stories to explain the origin of things. To explain earthquakes, they had fabricated the story of Vasuki, the great serpent who upholds the earth, as shaking his hydra-heads a little. To explain the origin of the universe they had invented the story of the golden egg that burst ; with regard to the sea their idea was, that there were seven seas—one of curd, one of wine, one of salt, one of milk, and so forth; and as to the earth, that it consisted of seven islands and had a triangular shape. I do not mean to say that the race, who first formulated the principles of Arithmetic, Trigonometry, Geometry and Astronomy, and from whom the world learned these sciences, was so stupid as not to know the simple truths of Physical Geography; a Bhaskara-charyya or a Varahamihira certainly knew them, and many things more, in advance of their age. But after the revival of Hinduism the spirit of inquiry had been directed from the material to the metaphysical world; the masses cared not to know the facts or the laws of external world, and were content with fables regarding them, because the temporal had no longer any attraction for them. They took the same interest in the outer world as a globe-trotter takes in what he sees. Their knowledge of their surroundings was as superficial and as full of mistakes as that of one who merely passes through a country, thinking that this is not his true home. The Hindus showed the subtlest knowledge with regard to that world which they considered to be the only real one, and their Metaphysics is a mixture of the simple and the complex, in various grades of spiritual thoughts, springing from those of home life—reaching the loftiest range in the conception of the Nirguna.

Nothing strikes a man so greatly as his contact with a person who possesses qualities other than his own, and the Bengalees are

a race who owing to their keen intellectual powers can at once enter upon a new field, as soon as it is presented to them. European hand-books and manuals took them by surprise. They disclosed a world to them of which they knew nothing. They saw in the civilisation of Europe a success and acquisition of power which struck them with wonder and they became willing disciples of the new teachers. In the passionate sincerity of our race to acquire new kno wledge, they forgot their wonderful success in metaphysical learning, and their great spirituality, and felt that they were dwarfed in the presence of that great materialistic civilisation which, armed with thunder and lightning and with the tremendous power of steam, stood knocking at their door—demanding audience.

"Young Bengal."

Young Bengal, as the new generation of the Bengalees were then called, became thoroughly anglicised in spirit. They exulted in Shakespeare's dramas and Milton's poetry; they read Schiller's Robbers and Goethe's Faust; they could name all the English dramatists of the Elizabethan Age—Marlowe, Philip Massinger, Ford, John Webster, Ben Johnson and Shirley and reproduce from memory lines from still earlier dramatists and from Holinshed's Chronicles which Shakespeare had improved on, in many a noble line. They grew mad after Shelley's Epipsychidion and Keat's Hyperion. Poor Chandidas, poor Vidyapati and Kavi Kankan! The tears of your departed spirit fell on the big towns of Bengal which lay under the charm of European influence,—mixed with nocturnal dews and unheeded by Young Bengal, who despised their own country from the bottom of their hearts and yet posed as representatives of the people in public meetings!

II. *(a) The College of Fort William*

The College of Fort William established by Lord Wellesley in 1800 was an institution, which having directly in view the

imparting of knowledge of different languages and other subjects to the European candidates for the Civil Service, proved to be a bond of sympathy and good will between the rulers and the ruled. The test of proficiency was high and severe. It was laid down that "Before any Civilian could obtain a degree, he was required to demonstrate his knowledge of the native languages by holding in regard to the service in Bengal, four disputations in the Persian or Bengali language before all Calcutta in an august assembly comprised of the natives of rank and learning, Rajas, Foreign Ministers, Pundits and Munsies." It was further ordained that "no promotion was to be given in the public service throughout India in any branch of the service held by Civilians except through the channel of the College."

A knowledge of the vernacular essential for the Rulers

This College was a place where the European candidates for the Civil Service, European professors and some of the best Indian intellects met on terms of intimacy. It was not a meeting between officers and their subordinates which necessarily becomes formal for the discharge of official functions, but of those who made it a great point of their earnest endeavours to understand one another mutually. The study of the oriental languages, a high standard of proficiency in which was made compulsory, enabled the Civilians to comprehend the inner feelings and ideals of the vast population whom they were called upon to rule. The College of Fort William produced the most salutary results, creating a sympathetic attitude in European minds towards the native community, and both sections derived great profit from an interchange of thoughts. In the case of our countrymen, this result was manifest in the adoption of European manners and in the preference given to the civilisation of the west, and in the case of the European Civil servants, in their sympathetic attitude towards the people of this country, and in the hearty interest taken in all the movements of reform calculated to improve the condition of the latter.

"The range of studies marked out for the students in the College was very extensive. It embraced the modern languages of Europe, the Greek, Latin and English Classics; Geography and Mathematics; general History, Botany, Chemistry and Astronomy: Ethics and Jurisprudence, the laws of nations—of England, and in reference to Indian studies the Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindustani, Bengali, Telegu, Mahratta, Tamil and Canarese languages and the history of the antiquities of Hindustan and the Dacan. The college was considered one of the most important departments of the State, and the Senior members of the Government were required in virtue of their office, to take a share in its management. Lord Wellesley proposed to erect a spacious and magnificent edifice for the institution in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta at Garden Reach, suitable for the accommodation of all professors and 500 students with a public hall, library, chapel and other requisite apartments."

The vast range of college-studies.

"Such was the grand institution which, Lord Wellesley projected to qualify the public functionaries for their official duties. It was the noblest and most comprehensive plan of usefulness which had been devised since the Factory had grown into an Empire."

"The incitements to exertion in the College of Fort William were of the highest and most effective nature and its moral, economical and religious discipline such as was admirably calculated to promote all that was virtuous and useful in civil society."*

"Several of those who attained the highest posts in the empire, and many, who, if they did not reach such a proud eminence yet departed with the esteem of the high, and confidence of the lowly, laid the foundation of future success within the precincts of the College. The well-known names of Macnaghton, Bayley, Jenkins, Haughton, Prinsep and others, are sufficient to prove the justness of this observation."†

* Memoirs of Dr. Buchanan, Vol. I, page 208.

† Calcutta Review, Vol. V.

(b) *The Pundits of the College*

The movement for undertaking literary and scientific works in Bengali prose, mainly initiated by the Europeans, served to evoke the zeal of the enlightened native community who pursued it with great vigour and activity. Some of the best prose works, on the lines indicated in the vernacular writings of Europeans, were compiled by the 'Pundits' of the Fort William College, where Dr. Carey, as a professor of the vernacular languages, wielded a great influence, and was ever ready to render all possible help to all undertakings to promote the cause of vernacular literature. The works written by Bengali authors in this period mainly follow European models in style, and the best of them, making all possible allowances, scarcely possess the worth of second class literary productions, whereas most of the others, while embodying rudimentary information in all departments of useful knowledge, are mere translations of European works—mostly school-books.

The Pundits of the Fort William College, as I have said, wrote many Bengali prose works about this time which enjoyed great popularity not only with the native community but with the Europeans, especially the candidates for Civil Service Examination who had to read them as text-books in that College.

Mrityunjay.

"At the head of the establishment of Pundits," (at the Fort William College) writes J. C. Marshman in his history of Seramapore Mission, stood 'Mrityunjay, who although a native of Orissa,* usually regarded as the Bœotia of the country, was a colossus of literature. He bore a strong resemblance to our great lexicographer not only by his stupendous acquirements and the soundness of his critical judgments but also in his rough features and unwieldy figure. His knowledge of the Sanskrit classics was unrivalled, and his Bengali composition has never been surpassed for ease, simplicity and vigour. Mr. Carey sat under his instruction two or three hours

* Mrityunjay Tarkalankar was born in 1762 A.D. at Midnapur.

daily while in Calcutta, and the effect of his intercourse was speedily visible in the superior accuracy and purity of his translations. In the English preface to the Probodha Chandrika, Marshman says of Mrityunjay as "one of the most profound scholars of the age."

Of the Bengali works written by Mrityunjay his *Prabodha Chandrika* is a monument of learning; it contains dissertations on Hindu Astronomy, Rhetoric, Law, Logic, Philosophy and other branches of learning of which the author was a perfect master. He makes a curious hotch-potch of the whole by combining the serious with the comic. The metaphysical subjects are huddled up with colloquies of artisans and rustics, and the whole is treated without much care for arrangement or system. The book was written in 1813. An edition of it appeared in 1833 after the author's death. Marshman further says in the preface, "the book is written in the purest Bengali of which indeed it may be considered one of the most beautiful specimens.....Any person who can comprehend the present work and enter into the spirit of its beauties may justly consider himself master of the language." Mrityunjay Tarkalankar wrote *Rajavali* in 1808. It traces the history of India from the earliest time down to Timur. Mr. Ward in his work on the Hindus bestows a high encomium upon this book. It contains some of the traditions about ancient Hindu kings, which may be of much help to the students of Indian history in substantiating thereby some of the informations derived from copper-plate inscriptions and other historical sources. The book is written in a simple style, though some of the expressions used by the learned author appear quaint to us, owing to the lapse of years. Mrityunjay's third work *Vatrisa-sinhasana* is a collection of tales illustrative of Vikramaditya's romantic self-denial and liberality to a beggar, to a Brahmin, to a scholar, to the poor, to a pundit and to an enemy.

Though the Pundit lived in close touch with his distinguished European students, and was highly admired by them for his learning and character, he was an orthodox Hindu all his life.

His pamphlet called "a defence of idolatry" shows the sweep of his scholarly arguments and the sincerity of his conviction in defending the creed of his forefathers. Mrityunjay translated the Sanskrit work Hitopadesa into Bengali. The book appeared in 1801. "It treats of friendship, discord, war and peace in 42 fables, in which after the manner of Æsop, animals are introduced to teach Ethics. The original, like Telemachus, was written for the ethical instruction of a king's son at Palibothera."

Mrityunjay also translated from Sanskrit a treatise on the Hindu law of inheritance.

Rama Rama Vasu

Next to Mrityunjay, we find Rama Rama Vasu—a Kayastha held in high esteem by the Europeans at Fort William College, for his great learning in different oriental languages. Says Dr. Carey about him " a more devout scholar than him I did never see." Rama Rama Vasu was born towards the end of the 18th century at Chinsura. He got this early education in a *pathasala* at the village of Nimta, a place in 24-Parganas, already noted as the birth-place of the old poet Krisna Rama. " Ram Vasu " writes Dr. Carey " before his 16th year became a perfect master of Persian and Arabic. His knowledge of Sanskrit was not less worthy of note..... He was of a peculiar turn of mind. Though amiable in manners and honest in dealings he was a rude and unkind Hindu if any body did him wrong." Rama Ram Vasu was appointed as a Pundit in the Fort William College in 1800, but owing to difference of opinion, resigned his post shortly after.

Rama Vasu's *Pratapaditya Charita* published in 1801 at Serampore was one of the first works written in modern prose. " Its style, a kind of Mosaic, half Persian half Bengali, indicates the pernicious influence which the Mahomedans had exercised over the Sanskrit-derived languages." We find the following account of the book in the descriptive catalogue of books by the Rev. J. Long. " The first prose work and the first historical one that appeared was the life of

Pratapaditya, the last king of the Sagara island by Rama Vasu, (page 156)." The Rev. J. Long also condemns this style of the book as corrupted by an admixture of Persian, but this estimate, I must say, is not just, for in the descriptions of wars and court-affairs the language could not in those days avoid a mixture of Persian in which all court affairs were managed even in the States under the control of Hindu Rajas. The great Sanskrit scholar and poet Bharat Chandra himself, who introduced some of the choicest Sanskrit metres in Bengali, could not describe war or court scenes without having recourse to Persian words. In describing domestic or religious matters Rama Vasu generally avoided Persian and Arabic words. His style is quaint and affected; at any rate as one of the earliest specimens of modern Bengali prose we may often excuse his faults, and be prepared to admit that he wrote a connected story in an interesting and lively manner. The other works by Rama Vasu were his (1) *Lipimala*, or a guide to letter-writing containing a number of models for letters. This treats also of business, religion, and Arithmetic,—printed at the Seramapore Press in 1802. (2) *Attack on Brahmins*. Rama Vasu was a friend of Raja Ram Mohan Roy who had kindly revised the MS. of *Pratapaditya Charit* before it was published. From some of his writings it appears that he favoured the views of his enlightened friend.

Chandi Charan and Rajib Lochan.

Two other works written by *Pundits* of the Fort William College respectively are (1) *Tota Itihas* by Chandi Charan Munsi which appeared in 1826, (2) *Krisna Chandra Charit* by Rajib Lochan Mukhopadhaya, which came out in 1805. The style of both these works is elegant. We quote an extract from Rajib Lochan's Krisna Chandra Charit. Raja Krisna Chandra of Navadvipa, an account of whom we gave in a foregoing chapter, is the subject of this memoir. The Raja, called by the Rev. J. Long 'The Augustas of the East' was a great friend of the English, and had been chiefly instrumental in persuading Mirzafar and other leading men of Bengal to form a secret alliance with them on the eve of

the memorable battle of Plassey. The extract refers to the defeat of Sirajuddaulla, his destitution and miserable end.

Krisna Chandra Charti.

*"The English next came to the field of Plassey and began to fight. The soldiers of the Nawab saw that their great generals were fighting in a half-hearted manner and that the volley of fire opened on them by the English was killing hundreds of them. In deep dismay many died fighting desperately. Mohan Das, a general of the Nawab saw that the fighting was not conducted as it should be, and informed the Nawab that some of his generals had conspired against him and were trying to bring ruin upon him. The Nawab wonderingly asked how that could be? Mohan Das submitted that the Commander-in-Chief Mirzafar Khan had made a secret league with the English and was not fighting. Mohan Das wanted an army to lead to the field to destroy them and warned the Nawab against placing confidence on any one at such a critical hour. He advised his master besides to keep a close watch, and guard the eastern gate with the remaining army. The Nawab was alarmed at this information, and placed Mohan Das at the head of 25,000 soldiers, and gave him every encouragement to fight at Plassey. Mohan Das began to fight with remarkable zeal, which alarmed the

The assassination of Mohan Das.

* "পরে ইঙ্গরাজের যাবদীয় সৈন্য পলাসীর বাগানে উপনীত হইয়া সমর আরম্ভ করিল। নবাবী সৈন্য সকল দেখিল যে প্রধান ২ সৈন্যেরা মনোযোগ করিয়া যুদ্ধ করে না এবং ইঙ্গরাজের অগ্নিবৃষ্টিতে শত শত লোক প্রাণত্যাগ করিতেছে। কি করিব ইহাতে কেহ উহা ক্রমে যুদ্ধ করিয়া প্রাণত্যাগ করিতেছে। যুদ্ধ ভাল হইতেছে না ইহা দেখিয়া নবাবের চাকর মোহন দাস নামে এক জন সে নবাব সাহেবকে কহিলেক আপনি কি করেন আপনার চাকরেরা পরামর্শ করিয়া মহাশয়কে নষ্ট করিতে বসিয়াছে। নবাব কহিলেন সে কেমন। মোহন দাস কহিল সেনাপতি মিরজাফরালি খান ইঙ্গরাজের সঙ্গে প্রণয় করিয়া রণ করিতেছে না অতএব নিবেদন আমাকে কিছু সৈন্য দিয়া পলাসীর বাগানে পাঠান আমি যাইয়া যুদ্ধ করি। আপনি বাকী সৈন্য লইয়া সাবধানে থাকিবেন পূর্ব্বের দ্বারে যথেষ্ট লোক রাখিবেন এবং এইক্ষণে কোন ব্যক্তিকে বিশ্বাস করিবেন না। নবাব মোহন দাসের বাক্য শ্রবণ করিয়া ভয়যুক্ত হইয়া সাবধানে থাকিয়া মোহন দাসকে পঁচিশ হাজার সৈন্য দিয়া অনেক আশ্বাস দিয়া পলাসীতে প্রেরিত করিলেন। মোহন দাস উপস্থিত হইয়া অত্যন্ত যুদ্ধ করিতে প্রবর্ত্ত হইল। মোহন দাসের যুদ্ধেতে ইঙ্গরাজ সৈন্য সশঙ্কিত হইল। মীরজাফরালি খান দেখিলেন এ কর্ম্ম ভাল হইল না যদ্যপি

English; Mirzafar saw that matters would not stand well for him if Mohan Das should gain the victory over the English and the present Nawab continue to reign, the lives of all of them would be forfeited. So it appeared to him of vital importance to check Mohan Das. Apprehending dire disaster, Mirzafar sent a messenger who declared himself as bearing a message from the Nawab to Mohan Das. He said that it was the order of the Nawab that the General should at once appear before him. Mohan Das said that it was not possible for him at that stage of the fight to leave the battle-field. The carrier of the false message said, "How is it that you do not obey the Nawab?" Mohan Das now felt sure that it was all a trick. Why should the Nawab call him at such an hour? So he at once beheaded the man and resumed the fight. Mirzafar was terror-struck; he thought all hope would be gone if things were allowed to continue in that manner any longer. So he called in a relation of his own, and ordered him to go as a soldier of the English and kill Mohan Das. That person immediately took a gun with him and going close to Mohan Das fired at him; so fell Mohan Das. The army of the Nawab dispersed and fled and the English were victorious.

Flight of the Nawab.

মোহন দাস ইঙ্গরাজকে পরাভব করে আর এ নবাব থাকে তবে আমাদিগের সকলেরি প্রাণ যাইবেক অতএব মোহন দাসকে নিবারণ করিতে হইয়াছে। ইহাই বিবেচনা করিয়া নবাবের দূত একজন লোককে পাঠাইলেন। সে মোহন দাসকে কহিল আপনাকে নবাব সাহেব ডাকিতেছেন শীঘ্র চলুন। মোহন দাস কহিল আমি রণ ত্যাগ করিয়া কি প্রকারে যাইব। নবাবের দূত কহিল আপনি রাজাজ্ঞা মানেন না। মোহন দাস বিবেচনা করিল এ সকল চাতুরী, এসময় নবাবসাহেব আমাকে কেন ডাকিবেন ইহা অন্তঃকরণে সিদ্ধান্ত করিয়া দূতের শিরশ্ছেদন করিয়া পুনরায় সমর করিতে লাগিল। মীরজাফরালি খান বিবেচনা করিল বুঝি প্রমাদ ঘটিল পরে আত্মীয় একজনকে আজ্ঞা করিল তুমি ইঙ্গরাজের সৈন্য লইয়া মোহন দাসের নিকট গমন করিয়া মোহন দাসকে নষ্ট করহ। আজ্ঞা পাইয়া একজন মনুষ্য মোহন দাসের নিকট গমন করিয়া অগ্রিবাণ মোহন দাসকে মারিল সেই বাণে মোহন দাস পতন হইল। পরে নবাবী যাবদীয় সৈন্য রণে ভঙ্গ দিয়া পলায়ন করিল, ইঙ্গরাজের জয় হইল।

"Sirajuddaulla heard all and saw that there was no way to escape, so he thought it prudent to beat a retreat. He embarked on a boat and fled. Mirzafar Ali Khan brought all this to the notice of the English General, and going to the Fort of Murshidabad hoisted the English flag whereby all knew that the noble people of England had gained the victory.

Joy of the people at the victory of the English.

They were all so delighted at the event that they began to shout for joy and play on various instruments of music. People of the higher classes went in great numbers with presents to the English General, who received them cordially, and ordered that all officers of the State should continue in their offices. He distributed tokens of his favour, moreover, among them. They placed Mirzafar Ali on the throne of Murshidabad and instructed the officers to carry on official work with care, so that the empire might flourish and the poor might not suffer. The officers began to work as they were bidden.

"After his defeat the Nawab in the course of his flight

The sad end of the Nawab.

became oppressed with hunger: for three days he had had no meal, and when on the fourth his boat was passing by the abode of a fakir he ordered a man to go to him and tell him that a certain man was very ill and

পরে নবাব সিরাজেদ্দৌল্লা সকল বৃত্তান্ত শ্রবণ করিয়া মনে মনে বিবেচনা করিলেন কোন মতে রক্ষা নাই, আপন সৈন্য বৈরী হইল, অতএব আমি এখান হইতে পলায়ন করি। ইহাই স্থির করিয়া নৌকারোহণ করিয়া পলায়ন করিলেন। পরে ইঙ্গরাজ সাহেবের নিকটে সকল সমাচার নিবেদন করিয়া মীরজাফরালি খান মুরসীদাবাদের গড়েতে গমন করিয়া ইঙ্গরাজি পতাকা উড়াইয়া দিলে সকলে বুঝিল ইঙ্গরাজ মহাশয়দের জয় হইল। তখন সমস্ত লোক জয়ধ্বনি করিতে প্রবর্ত্ত হইল এবং নানা বাদ্য বাজিতে লাগিল। বাবদীয় প্রধান প্রধান মনুষ্য ভেটের দ্রব্য দিয়া সাহেবের নিকট সাক্ষাৎ করিলেন। সাহেব সকলকে আশ্বাস করিয়া যিনি যে কর্ম্মে নিযুক্ত ছিলেন সেই ২ কর্ম্মে তাঁহাকে নিযুক্ত করিয়া রাজপ্রসাদ দিলেন। মীরজাফরালিকে নবাব করিয়া সকলকে আজ্ঞা করিলেন, তোমরা সকলে সাবধানপূর্ব্বক রাজকর্ম্ম করিবা যেন রাজ্যের প্রতুল হয় এবং প্রজালোক দুঃখ না পায়। সকলে আজ্ঞানুসারে কার্য্য করিতে লাগিলেন।

পরে নবাব সিরাজেদ্দৌল্লা পলায়ন করিয়া যান। তিন দিবস অভুক্ত অত্যন্ত ক্ষুধিত, নদীর তটের নিকট এক ফকিরের আলয় দেখিয়া নবাব কর্ণধারকে কহিলেন এই ফকিরের স্থানে গিয়া তুমি ফকিরকে বল কিঞ্চিৎ খাদ্য সামগ্রী দাও একজন মনুষ্য পীড়িত

that he wanted to eat food at his place. The fakir hearing this came near to the boat, and recognised the Nawab, who looked exceedingly pale. He thought "once upon a time the Nawab oppressed me and now the time for retaliation has come. I shall bring him up to Mirzafar." But with joined palms he said "I am arranging the dinner quickly, so that you may continue your journey as soon as possible after partaking of it." The Nawab was highly pleased with the courteous reception thus given him by the fakir, and went to his house in great confidence. The fakir began to make arrangements for the meal, but in the meantime he had sent a secret message to an officer of Mirzafar reporting that the Nawab was fleeing and that he should lose no time in seizing him. As soon as the officer got this information he hastened to the fakir's abode with a body of men, seized the Nawab and sent him to Murshidabad."

Fort William College dissolved in 1854.

The Fort William College with its glorious record of usefulness in the various departments of knowledge—and, what particularly interests us, its labours in the cause of Bengali prose literature, gradually lost its importance from the time of the foundation of Haileybury College in 1807, till its final extinction in 1854.

The Bengali prose works written by various authors early in the 19th century, though occasionally encumbered with compound words and quaint and high flown style, often show great erudition, as the writers were all learned *Pundits*. They enriched

কিঞ্চিৎ আহার করিবেক। ফকির এই বাক্য শ্রবণ করিয়া নৌকার নিকট আসিয়া দেখিল অসুস্থ নবাব সাজেদৌল্লা বিবর্ণ বদন। ফকির সকল বৃত্তান্ত জ্ঞাত হইয়া বিবেচনা করিল, নবাব পলায়ন করিয়া যায় ইহাকে আমি ধরিয়া দিব। আমাকে পূর্ব্বে যথেষ্ট নিগ্রহ করিয়াছিল তাহার শোধ লইব। ইহাই মনমধ্যে করিয়া করপুটে বলিল আহারের দ্রব্য আমি প্রস্তুত করি, আপনারা সকলে ভোজন করিয়া প্রস্থান করুন। ফকিরের প্রিয় বাক্যে নবাব অত্যন্ত তুষ্ট হইয়া ফকিরের বাড়ীতে গমন করিলেন। ফকির খাদ্যসামগ্রীর আয়োজন করিতে লাগিল এবং নিকটে নবাব মীরজাফরালিখানের চাকর ছিল তাহাকে সম্বাদ দিল, যে নবাব সাজেদৌল্লা পলায়ন করিয়া যায়, তোমরা তাহাকে ধর। নবাব মীরজাফরালি খানের লোক এ সম্বাদ পাবা মাত্র অনেক সমুহ একত্র হইয়া নবাব সাজেদৌল্লাকে ধরিয়া মুরশিদাবাদ আনিলেক।"

the prose literature by translations either from English or from the Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian languages. These works were generally compiled with great care; and considering the disadvantages from which the early labourers in any field must always suffer, we may excuse many of their inevitable short-comings. Personally, we have hitherto neglected the literature of this period being repelled, on the one hand, by the quaint bombastic style of our learned countrymen, and by the errors in idiom, on the other, into which European writers of Bengali have so frequently fallen. But this was an age in which Bengali prose had been taken up in earnest by men who spared no pains to contribute to its development; and there is surely much in these writings which will repay careful perusal by the writers of Bengal at the present day.

(c) *The Rev. K. M. Banerjee and other authors who followed in the wake of European writers. A list of their publications.*

Foremost amongst those who laboured in the field of Bengali prose under the influence of English education and the missionaries, was the Rev. K. M. Banerjee.

Born in 1813 at Calcutta, this scholar was trained in the Hindu College and was one of the most diligent pupils and admirers of Dr. Rozario whose influence upon "Young Bengal" was unbounded in his time. His pupils were imbued with European tastes, and though many of them rose to great eminence in later times, nearly all of them despised the orthodox religion and by their unrestrained conduct created great alarm in the minds of the Hindus. The comrades of Mr. Krisna Mohan Banerjee, in the enthusiasm of their reformation, used to throw bones and meat into the neighbouring houses, and then cry out that it was beef which they had deliberately thrown there to pollute the homes of their Hindu friends. Krisna Mohan in his youth was unsparing in

K. M. Banerjee.

his abuse of those who happened to hold a different view from himself in matters of religion and used to call the illustrious Radha Kanta Deb, who was one of the leaders of the orthodox community, by the name of Gadha Kanta, the word '*gadha*' meaning an ass.

Krisna Mohan embraced Christianity in 1832, and after the hey-day of his youth had passed, he was held in high esteem by Europeans as well as by our countrymen for the soundness of his views, his great scholarship and his coolness of temper.

His chief work in Bengali was the *Vidya Kalpa Druma* or Encyclopædia Bengalensis. It was started under the patronage of the Government in 1846, and dedicated by permission to the Governor-General of India. The following are some of the subjects which the Encyclopædia was designed to embrace :—

His Encyclopaedia Bengalensis.

(1). Ancient History—Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, India. Manners, Customs, opinions etc., of the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Hindus and other Asian nations.

(2). Modern History—of Europe, England, India, Bengal, America, etc.

(3). Science, Geography, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Metaphysics, Moral Philosophy, etc.

(4). Biographies of eminent men,—politicians, scholars, etc. European and Asian, ancient, and modern, more after the form of Cornelius Nepos, than the more elaborate work of Plutarch.

(5). Miscellaneous readings containing detached pieces of various kinds adapted to the comprehension of the people of Bengal. Anecdotes, orations, speeches, accounts of travels and voyages.

Thirteen volumes of the projected Encyclopædia came out, *viz* :—

1. History of Rome, Vol. I.
2. Do. , Vol. II.
3. Geometry, Vol. I.

4. Geometry, Vol. II.
5. Miscellaneous, extracts, Vol. I.
6. Do. , Vol. II.
7. Biography (containing the lives of Confucius, Plato Alfred, and Vikramaditya).
8. History of Egypt.
9. Geography.
10. Moral tales.
11. Watt, 'On The Mind,' Vol. I.
12. Do. , Vol. II.
13. Life of Galileo.

The Encyclopædia contains much useful information for the enlightenment of the Bengal public who had hitherto had no knowledge of the outside world, but it shows no original research in any field by the compiler, consisting, as it does, mainly of translations from standard European writers. The *Vidya Kalpa Druma* by Dr. K. M. Banerjee and the *Vividhartha Sangraha* by Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra (started in 1851) are two monuments of patient labour giving up-to-date information in the fields of Science and Art, which was so essential for the dissemination of useful knowledge among our countrymen in the earlier half of the 19th century.

A list of publications.

There was at the time quite a legion of Bengali works on the aforesaid lines, most of which have sunk into oblivion, after their brief day of usefulness in enlightening the masses of Bengal; and we can only name some of them to show in what direction the wind blew in our literature. For the list furnished below we have had to depend mainly upon the descriptive catalogue of Bengali books by the Rev. J. Long, published in 1855.

Vocabulary.

1. A Dictionary by Ram Kamal Sen (Grand father of the illustrious Kesab Chandra Sen), pp. 1534. "A work of great research—the result of 15 years' labour—a translation of Todd and Johnson containing the meanings in Bengali of 5800 English words—a perfect chaos of materials for future lexicographers and a work of great

industry with Radha Kanta's famous Sabda Kalpa Druma." The price of the book was Rs. 50 per copy.

2. Sabda Sindhu—translation of the Amara Kosa in Bengali by Pitambar Mukerjea of Uttarpara, 1909.

3. Rama Kisan's Vocabulary—English, Latin and Bengali, 1821.

4. Anglo-Bengali Dictionary by Tara Chand (75,000 words). Price Rs. 6.

5. Dictionary by Jay Gopal.

6. Do. by Laksmi Narayan.

7. Sabda Kalpa Tarangini by Jagannath Mallik.

These three works, all published in 1838, give suitable Bengali substitutes for the Persian terms prevalent in courts.

8. Dictionary by Jay Narayan Sarma, (16,000 words), 1838.

9. Ratna Haldar's Vangabhidhana (6224 words), 1839.

10. Anglo-Bengali Dictionary by Radhanath De & Co. A vocabulary giving the meaning of words relating to Grammar, Heaven, Earth, the Body, Natural Objects, Apparel, Minerals, and Agriculture, 1850.

11. *Parasikabhidhana* or Persian and Bengali Dictionary by Jay Gopal, 1840;—contains about 2500 Persian words arranged alphabetically with the Bengali meanings.

Grammar. 12. Ganga Kisore Bhattacharyya's Vyakarana.

13. A Bengali translation of the Mugdhabodha by Mathura Mohan Dutta of Chinsura, 1819.

14. Bhasa Vyakarana, 1823.

15. Ram Mohan Roy's Vyakarana, 1833.

16. Braja Kisore's Bengali Grammar, 1845.

17. Bhagavan Chandra's Bengali Grammar, 1845.

18. Sanskrit Grammar in Bengali by Devendra Nath Tagore, 1845. Part I "Extends to Pronouns—gives the rules of Sandhi and the declensions written after the European system of Philology,—simple, well illustrated by examples," published by the Tattva Bodhini Sabha.

19. Syama Charan's Anglo Bengali Grammar, pages 408—the most elaborate grammar that had appeared up to that time. Government patronised it liberally, taking 100 copies at Rs. 10 per copy;—contains much information on the prosody of Bengali poetry.

History.

20. History of India by Govinda Chandra Sen, 1836.

21. History of Bengal—a translation of Marshman's history, pages 337, 1840.

22. Vangala Itihas by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar from the battle of Plassey down to Lord William Bentinck's administration, 1849.

23. History of the Punjab by Raj Narayan Banerji, pages 194, gives much information respecting the Punjab, Kashmir, Kabul, Kandahar and the country of the Sikhs, derived from the Raja Tarangini, Ain-i-Akbari, Seyar Mutakharin, Prinsep's Life of Ranjit Singh, Lawrence's adventure in the Punjab and MacGregor's Sikhs.

24. Rome Puravritta by K. M. Banerji, pages 610.

25. Bharatvarser Itihas by Vaidya Nath Banerji. Two volumes, pages 352, 1848. Compiled from Manu, Yajnavalkya, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Rajavali, Books Gazetteer, Marshman's History of Bengal, etc. One object of this book was to oppose the views given in Marshman's India, which the author thinks too unfavourable to the Brahmins and in favour of Christianity. The book treats of the Chronology of ancient Hindu Kings, their residences, mode of government, origin of caste and other matters—a defence of Hindu character.

26. Bharatvarser Itihas by Gopal Lal Mitra, pages 201, 1840.

27. Rajavali by Syama Dhan Mukerjee, 1845.

28. Life of Bhabani Charan, "editor of the Chandrika and the great leader of the Pro-suttee party."

Biography.

"A curious piece of biography." I find the following notice of the subject of this memoir in John Clark

Marshman's History of Srirampur Mission: "In 1821 a Bengali newspaper was started in Calcutta which maintained great influence in native circles for many years. It was designated the Chandrika, and was edited by Bhavani Charana, a Brahmin of great intelligence and considerable learning, though no Pundit, remarkable for his tact and energy, which gave him great ascendency among his fellow countrymen. The journal was intended to check the liberal tendencies of the age, and it soon became the organ of the orthodox Hindus. During the life of its able and astute editor, it was considered the great bulwark of the current superstitions. Its success was owing not only to the popularity of the opinions which it advocated, but also to the charm of a pure and simple style."*

29. Satya Itihas, pages 239, 1830. Sketches of Semiramis, Sesostris, Homer, Lycurgus, Socrates, Demosthenes and Alexander.

30. Jivan Charita by Iswar Chandra Sarma, 1849. Lives of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Herschell, Grotius, Linœus, Duval, Thomas Jenkins, S. W. Jones.

31. Ajnana Timira Nasaka, 1838. By Vaidya Nath Acharyya of Kanchanpara.

Moral tales and other subjects.

32. Prasasti Prakasika, 1842. By Krisna Lal Deb, compiled from original Sanskrit of Vararuchi of the Court of Vikramaditya; gives rules according to the *Sastras* for writing letters—the colour and size of the paper, the titles of letters and mode of address. Some curious things are to be found in this work, such as,—a person is to write to a young girl in red paper with red ink; to a great man in gold-coloured letters; to a man of middle rank in silver; to a common man on copper or tin coloured paper; before marriage on vermilion; a letter to a great man is to be six finger-breadth long; to a person of middle class 18 inches; receiving a letter from a Raja or Guru it is to be laid on the head; from a friend on the forehead; from a wife on the breast.

* Vol. II, p. 241.

33. Jnana Kaumudi, on letter-writing by Rameswar Banerjee of Gopalapur.

34. Lipi Mala by Rama Rama Vasu, 1801.

35. Pasvavali (Animal biography) by R. C. Mitra.

36. Pakhi Vivaran—on birds, by R. C. Mitra, pages 660, 1834.

37. Padartha Vidya by P. C. Mitra, 1847.

38. Vividha Patha—Miscellaneous Readings, 1847.

39. Patradhara by Jay Gopal Tarkalankara, 1821.

40. Vanarastaka, 1834. By Raja Kali Kissen. A man disguised as an ape questions Raja Vikramaditya.

41. Stri Siksa Visayaka (on female education) by Gaur Mohan De, 1818, gives evidence in simple language in favour of the education of Hindu woman "from the examples of illustrious ones both ancient and modern and particularly of Indian females, such as Rukmini, Khana, Vidyalankar (?) who gave lectures at Benares on the Sastras; Sundari of Faridpur skilled in Logic; Ahalya Bai who conversed in Sanskrit and erected many buildings.

42. Stri Durachara—a reply to the above in the language of fierce ire published in 1840.

43. Hita Katha—100 ethical stories by Raja Kisore of Pulasati.

44. Jnana Pradipa—moral tales by Gauri Sankar Bhattacharyya, 1848.

45. Jnana Ratna—selection of morals by Prem Chand Ray, 1842, gives tales and anecdotes to illustrate the following subjects: Duty to parents and teachers—Knowledge and folly.

46. Jnana Chandrika—selection of ethical pieces, 1838, by Gopal Mitra.

47. Niti Katha—Moral tales by Rama Kamal Sen, prepared at the suggestion of a gentleman who was the father of a late Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces.

48. Manoranjan Itihasa by Tara Chand Datta, 1819. "The School-book Society alone had sold 18,000 copies" of the

book before 1854. The writer was in the employment of the late Captain Stewart of Burdwan.

49. Raja Kali Kissen's "A Lithography of an Orrery," 1826.

50. Geography and Eclipses by the same author in 1836.

Geography.

51. Elementary Geography published by the Tattva Bodhini Sabha, 1840.

52. Bhugola by Ksetra Mohan Datta, 1840.

53. Geography of Asia and Europe by the Rev. K. M. Banerjee, 1848.

54. Sandesavali—(Indian Gazetteer), pages 346, by Ram Narasinha Ghosh.

55. Map of the World—the first specimen of a map engraved in Bengali,—executed by a Bengalee, Kasi Nath, under the superintendence of C. Montague, 1821.

Geometry.

56. Geometry by K. M. Banerjee, 1846.

57. Bhuvana Parimana Vidya (Land surveying) by Braja Mohan, 1846.

Miscellaneous.

58. Chittotkarsa Vidhana—a philosophical work by the Rev. K. M. Banerjee, pages 600 in two volumes, 1849-50.

59. Phrenology by Radha Ballabh Das, 1850.

60. Bramly Vaktrita or Dr. Bramly's speeches by Uday Charan Adhya, 1836.

61. Atma Raksa by Rajkrisna Mukherjee—Compiled from Nidana, 1849.

62. Dravya Guna by Iswar Chandra Bhattacharyya, 1835.

63. Ausadha Kalapavali by Madhu Sudan Gupta, 1849, pages 244.

64. Jala Chikitsa (water cure) by Prema Chand Chaudhuri, 1850. The writer professes having experienced wonderful benefit from Hydropathy; he points out its advantages in the various uses of water applied internally and externally to different parts of the body for costiveness, fever, rheumatism, measles,

small-pox, dysentery, etc. He fortifies his arguments by quotations from the Hindu Medical Sastras.

Periodicals and Magazines

1. Dikdarsana by Seramapore Missionaries, 1818.
2. Gospel Magazines, 1823.
3. Brahmanical Magazine by Ram Mohan Roy, 1821.
4. Sastra Prakasa, 1851.
5. Jnanodaya by R. C. Mitter, 1831.
6. Vijnana Sevadhi by Ganga Charan Sen, 1832.
7. Jnana Sindhu Taranga by Rasik Mallick, 1832.
8. Four-anna Magazine, 1833.
9. Vidya Sara Samgraha, 1834.
10. Vidya Darsana by Aksay Kumar Datta, 1834.
11. Vidya Darsana by Prasanna Kumar Ghosh.
12. Kaustubha Kirana by Raj Narayan Mitra, 1846.
13. Jagatbandhu Patrika edited by the students of the Hindu College, 1846.
14. Satya Sancharini by Syama Charan Bose, 1846.
15. The Kayastha Kirana, 1846. It gives translations from the Puranas and advocates the claims of Kayasthas to wear the Brahminical thread.
16. The Durjana Damana Navami by Thakurdas Bose, (Tri-monthly), 1846;—opposed Young Bengal, defended idolatry, had as its symbol the picture of a cross fastened by a charm to signify that it would restrain Christian influence.
17. Hindu Dharma Chandrodaya by Hari Narayan Goswami.
18. Jnana Sancharini—organ of the orthodox community, 1847.
19. The Kavya Ratnakara, edited by the students of the Hindu College, 1847.
20. Muktavali by Kali Kanta Bhattacharyya. Commenced at the instigation of Raja Narayan of Andul, opposed the right of Kayasthas to wear the Brahminical thread, 1848.
21. Bhakti Suchaka by Ramnidhi, 1848.

22. Rasa Ratnakara by Jadu Nath Pal, 1849.
23. Satjnana Ranjana by Govinda Chandra Gupta, 1849.
24. Duraviksanika by Dwarika Nath Majumder, 1850.
25. Dharma Marma Prakasika from Konnagar, 1850.

Newspapers. 1. Bengal Gazette by Gangadhar Bhattacharyya, 1816.

2. The Sriramapura Darpana, 1818.

3. The Kaumudi edited by Ram Mohan Ray and Bhavani Banerjee, 1819.

4. Chandrika by Bhavani Charan, 1822. It was for many years Bengal's "Times of Calcutta."

5. Timira Nasaka by Krisna Mohan Das, 1823.
6. Vanga Duta by Nil ratan Haldar, 1825.
7. Sudhakara by Prem Chand Ray, 1830.
8. Prabhakara by Iswar Chandra Gupta, 1830.
9. Sabha Rajendra by Maulavi Alimolla, 1821.
10. The Jnananvesana by Rasik Mallick and Dakshina Mukerjee, students of the Hindu College, 1831.
11. The Ratnakara by Braja Mohan Sinha, 1831.
12. The Sara Sangraha by Beni Madhab De, 1831.
13. Ratnavali by Jagannath Mallick, 1832.
14. Sudhansu by Kali Kinkar Datta, 1835.
15. Divakara by Ganga Narayan Bose, 1837.
16. Saudamini by Kali Chandra Datta, 1838.
17. Gunakara by Giris Chandra Bose, an ex-student of Hindu College, 1858.
18. The Mrityunjaya by Parbati Charan Datta, 1838.
19. The Rasaraja by Gauri Sankar Bhattacharyya, 1839.
20. Arunodaya by Jagannarayan Mukherjee, 1839.
21. Murshidabad Patrika, 1840.
22. Jnana Dipika by Bhagavat Charan, 1840.
23. Sujana Ranjana by Govinda Chandra Gupta, 1840.
24. Bharata Bandhu by Syama Charan Banerjee, 1841.

25. Nisakara by Nilambar Das, 1841.
26. The Bhringa Duta by Nilkamal Das.
27. Raja Rani by Ganga Narayan Bose, 1854.
28. Jayada Dipaka by Maulvi Ali, 1846.
29. The Marttanda, 1846.
30. The Jnana Darpana by Umakanta Bhattacharyya, 1846.
31. The Pasandakirana by Isvar Chandra Gupta, 1846.
32. Rangpur Varttavaha by Nila Ratan Mukherjee, 1847.
33. Jnana Sancharini from Kanchrapara, 1847.
34. Sudhi Ranjana by Isvar Chandra Gupta, 1847.
35. Akkel Gurum by Braja Nath, 1847.
36. The Dikvijaya by Dwaraka Nath Mukherjee, 1847.
37. Jnananjana by Chaitanya Charan Adhikari, 1847.
38. Sujana Bandhu by Nibaran Chandra De, 1847.
39. The Manoranjana by G. C. De, 1847.
40. The Jnana Ratnakara by Biswambhar Ghosh, 1848.
41. Dinamani (scandalous), 1848.
42. The Ratna Varsana by Madhav Chandra Ghosh of Bhowanipur, 1848.
43. Rasa Sagara by Ram Gopal Banerjee of Kidderpore, 1848.
44. The Arunodaya by Panchanan Banerjee, 1848.
45. Rasa Mudgara—advocated Hinduism, by Ksetra Mohan Banerjee 1849.
46. The Mahajana Darpana by Jay Kali Basu, 1849.
47. The Satya Dharma Prakasika—an organ of the Kartabhajas.
48. Varanasi Chandrodaya.
49. The Bhairavananda, 1849,—both edited by Uma Sankar Bhattacharyya, a blind scholar who helped Raja Jaynarayan in his translation of Kasi Khanda.
50. Vardhamana Chandrodaya By Ramtaran Bhattacharyya, 1850.
51. Vardhamana Samvada, 1850.

III. General remarks chiefly indicating the characteristics of the new age and its contrast with the earlier one

These are some of the products of the literary labours of our countrymen in the vernacular tongue under the intellectual stimulus of the first contact with Europe. They continued the work with an ardour which has grown without intermission, and our present-day literature is the richest among the vernaculars of India in quality and in its many-sided activity. The list I furnish embrace the literature of a period ending 1850, but it is only at and after the middle of the 19th century that we can see the full harvest grown from the seeds sown at the beginning. The works on various subjects written in Bengali after the model of European works abound like "Autumnal leaves that strew the Brook in *Vallombrosa*" and it will be a hard task for the historian of the present epoch of our literature to make his selection from amongst the very considerable materials which will be at his command.

The growth of the modern literature.

Bengali literature, previous to the advent of the Europeans on the field, was mainly in the hands of the Vaisnavas and Saktas. The songs of Krisna Kamala who belonged to the former and of Ram Prasad who belonged to the latter sect, are the last great utterances of the two cults, the echoes of which will ring in the ear of future generations of Bengalees for ages to come. The *yatrawallas*, *kaviwallas*, and *panchalikars* drew profusely from the vast resources of our past lore, and having put the old sentiments in modern garb appealed to our masses. But with these people the last echoes of our past literature have nearly died out. There are still *kirtanas*, *kathakatas* and *yatras*, but they no longer contribute to the rich literature of the past. They only recite what the old masters have sung or said, and are mere relics of instructions which were once a living force in the country.

The representative character of our past literature.

The old literature of Bengal was a truly representative literature; Bharat Chandra's writings and Alaol's style, though so artificial and loaded with classical figures, were yet accessible to the masses of Bengal. The literature of the Bengalees belonged essentially to them all,—not to the literate merely, but to the whole race. For hundreds of years its ideas had been made familiar to the whole country by innumerable ways and means. The whole race had assimilated these sentiments which found expression in their literature; and even the finished expressions, and the highly coloured metaphors that had characterised the productions of latter-day Sanskritic Bengali were not unintelligible to the people. The best evidence of this statement will be found in the fact that very low classes of men and even those who are thoroughly illiterate, have preserved up to the present, works like the Padmavat which are still being printed for them. This shows great advancement on the part of the people in mastering a highly-wrought literary style, and the past literature of Bengal was the medium through which the words of her poets and scholars were communicated to the lowly, the humble and the poor who, often without knowing the alphabet, could understand the most difficult points in the Hindu philosophy or poetry under the educative influences of their own heredity and environment.

But towards the end of the 18th century the Vaisnavas and the Saktas were practically driven out of the field. Our vernacular literature passed into the hands of Europeans; and they trained a class of people to write manuals and school books after the manner of their own standard works. Mr. Wilkins trained Panchanan Karmakar in the art of punch-cutting, but this was not all; it was the Europeans and chiefly the missionaries who trained the Pandits to write Bengali,—not as they would have it, but as their European masters wanted it.

The old school upset.

The Vaisnavas and the Saktas, who had hitherto been at the helm of our literature, in spite of their occasional indulgence in ornamental style, always meant their works for readers who

would understand them. But the great Sanskrit scholars, the Bhattacharyyas, as the *Tol pundits* were called, had hitherto nothing to do with vernacular literature. They were now considered fit to write in the vernacular tongue on account of their proficiency in Sanskrit. Their classical accomplishments, however, proved an utter disqualification for the purpose.

We have seen that the specimens of early Bengali prose that have come down to us were all written in simple language. They were generally used for the interpretation of the doctrines of particular creeds or of Sanskrit texts. So the writers found it expedient to adopt the popular language.

The Bhattacharyyas.

But the Bhattacharyyas, not accustomed to write Bengali, showed the defects and faults of untrained hands. They affected a pedantic style which sounded strange to the Bengali ear. In their efforts to display their great learning they wrote in a ridiculous style which was difficult not only to foreign people but also even to Bengalees themselves. Pedantry of the old school of poetry, though sometimes carried to excess, had in it elements which suited the genius of our language. It was absurd in some places, but it was a natural though a peculiar growth. The pedantry of the Bhattacharyyas on the other hand—the volleys of high-sounding compounds that they poured out—were unbearable in our language. It was as if giants had been let loose; and the artistically decorated gardens, into which they had found entry, could ill bear their heavy and unweildy tread. We quote here a few specimens of their style. The great Pandit Mrityunjay of the Fort William College, whom Dr. Marshman compared to Johnson in all respects, wrote in his Prabodha Chandrika.

Specimens of their style.

"কোকিল কলালাপ বাচাল যে মলয়াচলনিল সে উচ্ছলচ্ছীকরাতাচ্ছ নির্ঝরাম্ভঃ কণাচ্ছন্ন হইয়া আসিতেছে।*

*"The Malaya breeze, resounding with the warbles of the cuckoo, is becoming drenched with the transparent particles of the over-flowing sprays of water."

In a translation of the Government Regulations and Laws, entitled the Adalat Timira Nasana, by one Ram Mohan Ray (he could not have possibly been the illustrious Ram Mohan Ray) printed in 1828, we find a preliminary prayer in prose, addressed to God as follows :—

† "বারংবার অপার জগদুদয়স্থিতিসংলয়াদি সাধারণকারণ মানস-বাক্-পথাতীত পরমাদ্ভুত বিবিধবিচিত্রচিন্তাতীত পরাৎপরানন্ত বৈভবানুক্ষণ বিস্তারক অবিরত্যাধ্যাত্মিকাদিবহুবিধতাপকলাপকবলিত-বিকলিত-মানস-মানবসমূহনিস্তারক পরমকারুণিক মনুজাণ্ডজ বিবিধস্থলচরজলচরাকাশচর কীটপতাঙ্গাদিজীবকৃত সতত সদসদ্বিচারক জগদেকনিয়ামক বিশ্বোপকারার্থ দিনকরনিশাকরাসংখ্যেয় তারকাদ্যনিশবিভ্রমকারক সদাচারনিরত সর্ব্বজনমোদক তৎকর্ত্তৃক নিখিল-কার্য্যানুদৃষ্টা শ্রবণমননদ্বারা অকিঞ্চিৎস্বরূপাভাসমাত্র রূপকাখিলাধ্যক্ষের প্রতি গণণাতিরিক্ত প্রণতিপূর্ব্বক বিশিষ্টশিষ্ট সদসদ্বিচারকমহাশয়সমূহ সমীপেষু বহুতর বিনয়পুরঃসর নিবেদন।"

All this is a single sentence, which moreover is not yet complete; it appears like some monstrous sea-reptile coiling into a thousand folds and dragging itself to an appalling length.

Praphulla Jnananetra.

The author of "Praphulla Jnananetra" is Isanchandra Banerjee. This writer grievously errs in every sentence in spelling, yet poses as a great and erudite scholar. His address to Hare Krisna Addy in the dedication shows that, however inferior may be his qualifications, he desires to surprise the readers by his pedantry.

†"To him who is the cause of the creation, of the preservation and of the final dissolution of the universe which occurs again and again in cycles—who is beyond all comprehension and whom no language can express,—no thought however subtle can reach,—to Him who is the saviour of all men, ground down and distressed by Providential and physical and other evils, who is mercy itself and the one great equitable Judge of the deeds virtuous or otherwise of men, of the oviparous, aquatic, and amphibious animals, of worms and birds,—to Him who is the great law-maker of the universe, who for the good of the world created the moving celestial bodies—the sun, the moon and the innumerable stars, who observes all, and only a glimpse of whose attributes is obtained by our perception of sight, hearing etc.,...after offering numberless salutations to that great Master of the universe, next with humility and respect do I approach the benevolent judges of right and wrong with the prayer that—."

"আপনকার সাহায্যতরণী কর্ত্তৃক গভীর তিমির দুস্তার অজ্ঞানার্ণব হইতে নিস্তার পাইয়া"

(which means,—'being enabled to cross the illimitable and the deep sea of ignorance by the boat of thine help).'

In "Sarvamoda Tarangini" written in 1850—a work expounding theistic principles, we find "সর্ব্বোপাস্য সর্ব্বশক্তিমান সর্ব্বান্তর্য্যামী সর্ব্বস্বামী সর্ব্বভূতের কর্ত্তা পাতা বিধাতাকে সর্ব্বতোভাবে প্রণাম পূর্ব্বক সর্ব্বামোদতরঙ্গিণী নামক গ্রন্থ প্রকাশ করিতেছি।"

Sarvamoda Tarangini

Representative character lost

The whole literature of the period abounds with such absurd instances of pedantry. They are specimens of composition by untrained hands. Those who were the natural leaders, so long acknowledged to be the masters of the vernacular style of composition,—at whose hands and by whose disinterested and self-sacrificing labour Bengali literature had flourished and attained distinction,—the Vaisnava and Sakta writers, were ousted from the field, and in their places the Tol pandits, who knew nothing of our past literature, whose study was confined to Sanskrit, were called in to write Bengali books; the result was that their unwieldy style and uncouth form struck a discordant note to the spirit of our language. Besides, the subject-matter which they chose was as upon the model of European books. This naturally failed to appeal to our masses unacquainted with the new spirit which was inspiring the authors of our modern prose. Modern literature thus lost that representative character which the yellow leaves of the old MSS. had so pre-eminently possessed. A foreign plant was, as it were, engrafted on an old tree and it required years for the graft to grow and become a true and living branch of our literature.

and the link broken

The old school had been a homogeneous creation; one would hear the echo of Vidyapati, who died 400 years ago, in Bharat Chandra who came 250 years later. The echoes of Chandi Das's songs, sung 500 years ago,

were traceable in the lays of the modern *kaviwala*; and the joys and sorrows, pain and pleasures, embodied in Bengali literature extending over a period of 700 years worked in the minds of the whole Bengali race and found a ready response in every soul. The niceties and even the pedantry of our past literature proved no barrier, as I have said, to our masses in enjoying the production of the artificial school of poetry which grew up under circumstances natural to the soil. But now the link was suddenly snapped. Our old literature was, as it were, walled up, and a new one substituted which the people found inaccessible to them, and thus Bengalis ceased for half a century to understand the literary Bengali of this age,—the time required by the masses to train themselves up to the new style and to the new subject-matter. Even now the works of some of our best modern poets, written in the simplest of terms, seem unintelligble to a large section of the people, because of the European ideas in them with which they are not familiar; and yet these readers can scale all the heights of the mystic metaphors of Bharat Chandra and Alaol.

Admixture of Persian.

Persian scholars no less than Sanskrit-knowing pandits contributed towards making the style of modern prose in its early stages, cumbersome and corrupt to a degree; and we have found such specimens of writing in Rama Rama Vasu's Pratapaditya printed at the Serampore Press in 1800 A.D. Lipimala or model letters by his author shows a style which was in current use in the country for long years. The epistles on mercantile and state affairs show a greater preponderance of Persian words, whereas the correspondence of a domestic and personal nature and those on religious subjects were generally free from such admixture. The addresses to high personages contained stereotyped sentences which were full of corrupt Sanskrit words. The form seems to have come down from a very remote age. Here is a curious specimen of the usual form of one Raja addressing another. We take the extract from the Lipimala.

Lipimala

"রাজাধিরাজ হিন্দুস্থান মাঝ যাহা দর্পময় ক্ষমা অতিশয় সরলান্তকরণ রূপ হেমবরণ শক্তিমন্ত ধীর অতি মহাবীর আত্মলোকপাল বৈরীমর্দ্দকাল শ্রীমান গুণধর মহারাজ রাজেশ্বর রাজচক্রবর্ত্তীর সাহায্য লিপি লেখা যাইতেছে।"

When Bengali literature had been thus placed in inexpert hands and committed to pedantic follies from which there seemed no way of its resuscitation, the European writers of Bengali cut a new channel of their own and made the style of vernacular prose flow into it; it was thus saved from the mazy and intricate paths of involved sentences and compound words in which it had entangled itself. The European writers naturally chose simple and short sentences and colloquial words and obliged the pandits to write in a similar style. However high a pandit might soar in the atmosphere of classical learning, he certainly knew the colloquis dialect of his country, though he had hitherto treated it with great contempt and had never thought of adopting it as a medium for literary composition. We find Dar Carey employing Pandits to write a portion of his colloquies in Bengali, and even Mrityunjay, the great scholar was made to introduce a colloquial style into his Prabodha Chandrika. Side by side with his উচ্ছলচ্ছিকরাত্যচ্ছনির্ঝরাম্ভঃকণাচ্ছন্ন হইয়া আসিতেছে" we find :—

The colloquial style favoured by the Europeans

* "স্ত্রী কহিল, গুড় হইলেই কি রাঁধা হয়? তৈল নাই, লুন নাই, চাউল নাই, তরকারী পাতি কিছুই নাই। কাঠগুলি সকলি ভিজা, বেসাতি বা কিরূপে * * * কুটনা বা কে কুটিবে, বাটনা বা কে বাটিবে? তৎপতি কহিল, আজ কি ঘরে কিছুই নাই, দেখ দেখি খুদ কুঁড়া যদি কিছু থাকে, তবে তার পিঠা কর, এই গুড় দিয়া খাইব। ইহাতে তাহার স্ত্রী কহিল, বটে পিঠা করা বুঝি বড় সহজ? জান না, পিঠা আঠা; যেমন আঠা লাগিলে শীঘ্র ছাড়ে না, তেমনি পিঠার লেঠা বড় লেঠা, শীঘ্র ছাড়ে না। কখনো ত রাঁধিয়া খাও নাই আর লোকদের মাউগের মতন মাউগ পাইয়া থাকিতে, তবে জানিতে।"

* "The mistress of the house said, 'Is molasses the only thing required for cooking? There is no oil, no salt, no rice, no vegetables of any kind; the fuel is wet. What about the spices? My son's wife is out of health and cannot work. Who will grind the spices and who will prepare the vegetables?' Her lord said, 'Look closely; is nothing available in the house? See, woman, if you can find out some refuse rice and make cakes with it. We

The great Pandit Mrityunjay, who could discourse on all the six systems of Hindu philosophy, would hardly have condescended to adopt the despised *patois* of the country and to choose such an humble subject for treatment, had it not been imposed on him as a task by the European masters of the Fort William College.

The European's Bengali.

It was unavoidable that Europeans writing in Bengali would now and then commit mistakes of idiom. Instances of rendering 'গোপাল উড়ের যাত্রা' as 'the flying journey of Gopal' and 'বীচি বিক্ষেপ হইতেছিল না' as 'did not shed its seeds' or 'শরীরের দুষ্ট রসিকতা' as 'bad humours of the body' and similar expressions which would amuse every Bengali, abound in the prose writings of the foreign scholars; and if they had had occasion to cultivate our language with the earnestness with which we are acquiring English, it is certain that we should have had as ample materials at our command to amuse ourselves as the ridiculers of "Babu English" have at theirs.

Errors in idioms.

We find in the Sarasangraha by Dr. Yates, a very good scholar of Bengali, such lines as "ভ্রমণের দ্বারা তাহাদের মন প্রফুল্ল ও উত্তম হইতে পারে এবং অনেক অনেক বিবেচনার কথা উপস্থিত হইতে পারে।" The writer confounds চিন্তা with বিবেচনা in the last line. In a Bengali vocabulary the difference in meaning of the two words is not indicated; and it is only to be known by a mastery of the idiom, hence this writer fell into such an error.

In a grammar of the Bengali language by the Rev. J. Keith, we find the following curious specimens :—

একবচন	নিত্যশুদ্ধ ভূতকাল।	বহুবচন
আমি করা যাইতেছিলাম		আমরা করা যাইতেছিলাম
তুমি করা যাইতেছিলা		তোমরা করা যাইতেছিলা
তিনি করা যাইতেছিলেন		তাহারা করা যাইতেছিলেন

shall take them with molasses.' The mistress said, 'Indeed, is the preparation of cakes so simple then? They say that the making of cakes is like putting gum in the hands, if once it sticks, it takes a good deal of time to clean it off. Cake preparation takes much time and is full of trouble. You never cooked anything in your life, husband, therefore you speak so foolishly. Had you had an ordinary woman for your wife you would by this time, no doubt, have had much bitter experience."

In Satguna-O-Viryyer Itihas written in 1829 by a Serampore missionary, we come across the following sentences on the title page :—

"সকল লোকের হিতার্থে বাঙ্গালা ভাষায় তর্জ্জমা করা গেল। তাহার একদিকে ইংরাজী ও এক দিকে বাঙ্গালা।"

General excellence of style.

But in spite of these unavoidable defects met with now and then in the use of Bengali idioms, the vernacular style of the foreign writers commended itself generally for its simplicity, closeness of argument, and directness as contrasted with the high-flown, unmeaning jargons of scholarly pedants ; and the latter had gradually to adopt the simpler style of the European which erred occasionally in idiom, but was, generally speaking, correct and elegant.

Indirect benefit.

The indirect benefit derived from the writing of vernacular works by Europeans was great, for they controlled Bengali prose ; and though it was taken out of the hands of the Vaisnavas and the Saktas, it came once more into competent hands, who made it a vehicle of thought and not a show thing to be admired for artistic excellence or rendered too abstruse for popular understanding by pedantic follies.

Europeans ceased to take as great an interest in the vernacular literature as they had done in the first half of the 19th century, only when the native hand grew sufficiently strong to take up the work in right earnest, and this our country men ere long did, even beyond all expectations of their friendly patrons.

Scientific and technical terms.

The great zeal of the European writers of Bengali prose is evidenced by the fact that Mr. Felix Carey coined scientific and technical terms for writing on those subjects in Bengali. How far he succeeded in his attempt is not the question, but it shows the ardour of his soul in attempting to bring the vernacular language of Bengal up to the standard of the advanced languages of the world. In the descriptive catalogue of Bengali by the Rev. J. Long, we find the following reference to this fact,—" Goldsmith's History of England (Bengali translation of) came out in 1819. Pages 412, by Felix

Carey, an able Bengali scholar, the history closes with the peace of Amiens in 1802. A useful glossary of technical and difficult words was appended, though some names are rendered curiously. Admiral of the Blue is Nilpatakadhyarnava, Whig is Svatantra Paksapati." "Haravali or Anatomy by Carey. The glossary of the techical terms by the translator Felix Carey, a good Bengali scholar, is of use to translators."

Books in colloquial style.

Under European influence a taste of writing in the colloquial language came into considerable favour ; and writings like Alaler Gharer Dulal and Hutum Pechar Naksa, which are usually supposed to be our first attempts at witty writing in the colloquial dialect, were preceded and anticipated in style by numerous works which served as models to Tek Chand Thakur and Kali Prasanna Sinha in later times. Some of these earlier works reached a high level of success and were very popular at one time. Nowhere in the whole range of colloquial literature of this epoch, do we find a better sample of style or display of naive humour, and of scathing satire than in the Nava Babu Vilas or sketch of a modern Babu by Pramatha Nath Sarma, published in 1823. The Rev. J. Long in 1855 wrote of this book as "one of the ablest satires of the Calcutta Babu as he was thirty years ago. New editions of the work are constantly issuing from the press. The Babu is depicted as germinating, blossoming in flower, in fruit. The Babu under Guru Mahasaya, under the Munsi, devoted to licentiousness and his lament for past folly. It is a kind of Hogarth's Rake's Progress." The book was analysed at length in the Quarterly Friend of India, 1826.

The ablest satire of the time.

I quote below an extract from this book. There is no need for any comment on the corrupt taste which prevails in it—which was the vice of the age and the spirit of the time.

*" Then came dancing girls—three or four parties of them—a glorious band,—those who generally appear in the foremost row

* "আর যাহারা বিবাহাদি সময় রাস্তায় সর্কারে তক্তারামায় আরোহণ করিয়া নৃত্য করে, এমত নর্ত্তকী প্রায় তিন চার সম্প্রদায় আইল ; তৎপরে সকলের আগমনানন্তর

of a marriage procession and, riding on *Taktaram* (a state *palkee*), dance to the admiration of the on-lookers. When all had joined the party, the Babu with his *chadar* on his neck, as a sign of humility, and with clasped palms, addressed Bakna Piary and other dancing girls,—the best of their kind, reputed far and wide, and worshipped by the public, and said "Be pleased now to take a bath." The other admirers of these fair creatures appeared on the scene and at the request of the Babu rubbed perfumes on their delicate persons, and with Kanchagolla (a rich pudding) cleaned their long black hair; the servants with a feeling of great reverence took them to tanks, and in a sportive spirit poured water upon their heads, and then came the admirers who bathed them with rose-water. At this stage the tailor came and produced a bundle of fine clothes. There were in the bundle beautiful *saris* made by the far-famed weavers of Santipur, Ambika, Badagachhi, Dacca, Chandrakona, Khasbagan and other places. Some of these fine stuffs had beautiful borders in imitation of Kashmir shawls,

বাবু জনসমাজ পূজ্যা বারাঙ্গনাগ্রগণ্যা বক্না পেয়ারী প্রভৃতির নিকট গললগ্নকৃতবাস হইয়া কহিলেন 'আপনারা স্নান করুন' তৎপরে অন্য ভক্তগণ আসিয়া বাবুর আজ্ঞামত আতর মর্দ্দন করাইলেক, কাঁচাগোল্লা দিয়া মাথা বসাইয়া দিলেক, নির্ম্মল পুষ্করিণীর জল ক্রীড়াচ্ছলে কুতূহলে ভৃত্যগণের বহুসমাদরে ভক্তগণেরা গোলাপ জলে শরীর ধৌত করাইলেক। সেই সময়ে এক গাটি বস্ত্র আনিয়া উপস্থিত করিলেন। শান্তিপুর, অম্বিকা, বাদাগাছি, ঢাকা, চন্দ্রকোণা, খাসবাগান, বরাহনগর প্রভৃতি নানা স্থানের শাটী, শালপেড়ে, কাঁকড়াপেড়ে, লালপেড়ে, নীলপেড়ে, তাবিজপেড়ে, বরানগরের, দূরে ব্যক্তিবিশেষে প্রদান করিলেন। তৎপরে আনন্দকাননে অপূর্ব্বাসনে সর্ব্বজন প্রফুল্লবদনে বেশ্যাসমবিধানে উপবিষ্ট হইলেন, সেই আসনে ভৃত্যগণেরা নানাবিধ সুখাদ্য মিষ্টান্ন মদ্য মাংস আনিয়া প্রস্তুত করিলেক; ইতিমধ্যে এক নির্ব্বোধ পূর্ব্বদেশীয় বাঙ্গাল ব্রাহ্মণ কহিলেক, যে ভোজনকালে পৃথক পৃথক স্থান করিতে হইবে। এমন সময়ে খলিফার কুলপুরোহিত শিরোমণি কহিলেন "ওরে নরাধম মূর্খ শাস্ত্র জানিলি না, এক্ষণে এস্থল ভৈরবী-চক্র বলা যায়, ভৈরবী-চক্রে জাতিবিচার নাই। প্রমাণঃ যথা—

'আগতা ভৈরবীচক্রে সর্ব্বে বর্ণা দ্বিজোত্তমাঃ
পীত্বা পীত্বা পুনঃ পীত্বা পুনঃ পতন্তি ভূতলে
উত্থায় চ পুনঃ পীত্বা পুনর্জ্জন্ম ন বিদ্যতে'

ইত্যাদি প্রমাণ শুনিয়া সকলে হৃষ্টচিত্ত হইল। হিন্দু মুছলমান বেশ্যা সাধারণ ভাবতেই নির্ম্মলান্তঃকরণে একাসনে বিবিধ মদ্য মাংস প্রভৃতি নানা দ্রব্য ভোজন করিলেন।"

others with borders in which the figures of crabs were neatly woven with the threads, and others where the amulet was imitated. These elegant borders were of different colours, purple, blue and crimson. The Baranagar striped *saris* looked particularly gay. These clothes were distributed by the tailor among the worthy votaries of the terpsichorean art. Then in the pleasure garden the Babu and his friends seated themselves on costly seats with the accomplished hirelings. The servants brought to them various kinds of sweetmeats, meat and wine in profuse quantities, when a fool of an East Bengal Brahmin said that there should be separate seats at dinner. Hearing this the high priest of the Babu—the jewel of the forehead of all *Pandits*—stepped forward and said 'O thou the most despised of all mortals, dost thou not know the sacred books, dunce and illiterate as thou art? This is a *Bhairavi chakra* (a circle of the Tantrics), as people of various castes are present here and women have joined us. In a *Bhairavi chakra* no caste distinction should be observed. You want authority! Here it is :—

The reception to the dancing girls.

Upsetting of caste rules in the Chakra.

Recites a Sanskrit couplet which means:—

'Those who join a Bhairavi *chakra*, whatever caste they may belong to should be considered for the time-being as the best of Brahmins. They should all drink wine, till they turn tipsy and reeling fall to the ground and rise to drink again. If they do so they shall be free from all future births and attain final emancipation.'

"When authority had thus been quoted all were quite satisfied and the Hindus, Muhammadans and women of ill fame sat together with a clear conscience, and began to eat various preparations of meat and other dainties with profuse quantity of wine."

The *Pundits* took up Bengali prose under the direction of European writers of Bengali; and under their direction also the former had to come down from high flown bombasts to colloquial simplicity. The best

A serio-comic aspect.

works produced by the *Pandits* during this epoch of our literature are characterised, on the one hand, by ascent to obscure heights and, on the other, by descent to slang;—from the cloudy region of philosophical dissertations to the housewife's harangue with her husband on the question of the preparation of cakes. There was no *via media*. When the theme soared high, it became mystic,—the phalanx of compound words scarcely left a loop-hole for the ordinary reader's understanding to penetrate into it; but when it came down from these heights it grovelled in the mire of vulgarity; street scenes were described in terse, forcible but exceedingly corrupt style; all limits of decency were exceeded,—coarse and flat jokes passed for humour, and the Bengali prose of the period presented a serio-comic aspect which puzzles us in its seriousness and almost repels when it tries to amuse.

The good result.

But the advent of the *Pandits* into the field of Bengali, though associated in the earlier stages of its modern prose with uncouth efforts verging on the ridiculous, was not an unmixed evil. Their productions materially aided the cause of Bengali style in the long run. The *Pandits* had a perfect command over the Sanskrit vocabulary and Sanskrit grammar and aimed at a pure grammatical style which was gradually introduced into Bengali prose, mainly through their influence and by their writings. Under the salutary control of the European scholars these *Pandits* were trained to write in a simple style and they no longer despised the colloquial dialect from which they gradully imported a large number of simple and elegant expressions into the written language. Modern prose was developed both in purity of style and in resources of words by the efforts of these scholarly writers, and abundant proofs of this are to be found in the standard works of the 19th century, written by them. In the prose works of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar we have that crowning success in prose composition to attain which the *Pandits* had been struggling for half a century. The high sounding compounds were reduced in his writings to simpler and more elegant forms, the coarse and the vulgar element was

eliminated; and living at this distance of time, as we do, we cannot help being struck with the inimitable grace and purity of his style. He saved our prose alike from pedantry and vulgarity and adopted a golden mean, which only a finished master of Sanskrit and gifted *litterateur* could achieve.

The high price of printed books.

The printing of Bengali books was a costly affair in those days. We have seen that Dr. Carey calculated the cost of printing ten thousand copies of the Bengali New Testament at Rs. 43,750, and that even at the wrong estimate of the cost of a punch at 5*s*. whereas it was really worth a guinea. Considering the enormous expenditure on printing as also the very limited sale of Bengali books, we should not be surprised at the high price of many of the books of this period; for instance Mitter's Bengali Dictionary, published in 1801, "equal to an 8vo of 50 pages;" price Rs. 32; Tara Chand Chakravorty's Anglo Bengali Dictionary, pages 25, price Rs. 6. "The original price of Krishna Chandra Charita by Rajiva Lochana was Rs. 5 only for 120 pages. It barely paid its expenses then, so limited was the demand for Bengali books."

Journals edited by students.

The energetic devotion displayed in the cause of learning by the students of the Hindu College under the influence of Dr. Richardson and Mr. D'Rozario is evidenced in the list of Bengali newspapers and magazines of this period already given on a foregoing page. Along with a hundred other channels into which that energy flowed for promoting the cause of learning, no less than four journals (Nos. 13, 19, pp. 908-909 and Nos. 10 and 17, p. 911,) were edited and conducted by the students of the Hindu College.

The excellence of the Hindu method in arithmetic.

It is curious to observe that when the English were introducing European educational methods into our schools, they were frequently struck with the excellence of the Hindu method of teaching, current in our Pathasalas, and this they freely admitted An English writer in the London Asiatic Journal, 1817, destows a high panegyric on the arithmetical rules set to doggerel rhymes

by Subhankara who is said to have been "the Cocker of Bengal." "These rules" wrote another English reviewer in the middle of the 19th century "have been chanted for 150 years in 40,000 schools. Thus the Hindus took the lead in a practice which have been since introduced into our infant schools." In the May-Ganita printed at Serampore in 1817, the author, Mr. May, says of the Subhankari Aryyas in his preface to the book:—"It is remarkable that many coincidences may be traced between them and the most improved kind of arithmetical tables adopted in the schools in Britain on the new model."

IV (*a*) *Decadence of the high spiritual ideal in Hindu Society, and the advent of Raja Ram Mohan Roy.*

When Buddhism had sunk into depraved Tantric rites, sophistry and atheism, the Hindu Society awaited but a touch from outside for blossoming into that living faith which is so pre-eminently observed in the lives of Chaitanya and Nanak. The Renaissance brought about by the great Sankara required only a touch of the faith of Islam to develop the creed of faith into the creed of love, which in the 16th century showed itself in the glories of renunciation and the spiritual ecstasies of so many ardent souls. Similarly also when towards the end of the 18th century, the religion of the Hindus was more or less reduced to superstitious practices, and empty ceremonies and rituals, Hindu society required only a touch from outside to be restored to a realisation of high spiritual truths. The Christian Missionaries awakened the spirit of research into religious truth once more in the minds of our countrymen, who were never found slow to respond to a call for putting forth their best activity in the cause of religion.

A touch from outside.

The simple ways taught by Chaitanya Deva, of reciting the name of God and of praying to Him in the spirit of true renunciation had gradually fallen into disfavour. Pompous

processions and great festivities accompanied with dances of *nauch* girls and display and flourish of materialistic grandeur now attracted people to religion, which had, however, lost its serious character, and had become a source of amusement to the vulgar. The great devotees had already begun to realise the uselessness of a multiplicity of religious rites, and the vanity which frequently prompted the ostentation of religious festivals in Bengal. Raja Ram Krisna expressed the idea in one of his songs that he would fling away his rosary into the waters of the Ganges as soon as true devotion for the divine Mother should dawn on his mind,—thus showing an utter disregard of formal observances in religion; and Rama Prasad already quoted in chapter VI, said of himself that he was a fool to worship an image of clay, when his divine Mother was manifesting herself throughout the whole universe. He said how foolish it was to kill goats before the image instead of sacrificing the passions—his real enemies, and that it was but so much energy wasted to visit the sacred shrines. If one's mind is fixed on the lotus feet of the Mother, he will feel within all the sanctity of the Ganges and of the holy cities of Benares and Gaya.

Ostentation in religion.

Violation of petty rules was regarded as a great sin in the code of the Brahmins. "That infidel who has not cleansed his teeth before sunrise has no right to worship God.* "One who takes Putika (*Basella lucida*) on the twelfth day of a lunation is worse than a murderer of Brahmins." "One who takes a meal while touching the seat with his feet is to be reckoned as a beef eater."†

Severe codes for petty offences.

"If one raises a cup of water with one's left hand and drinks therefrom one commits the offence of him who drinks wine."‡

* "উদিতে জগতীনাথে যঃ কুর্যাদ্দন্তধাবনম্।
স পাপিষ্ঠঃ কথংব্রূতে পূজয়ামি জনার্দন॥"

† Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Bengali works edited by Rajnarayan Bose, p. 620.

‡ Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Bengali works, published from the Panini Karyalaya, Allahabad, p. 228.

These were some of the rules for the guidance of a Hindu householder's life. "Murder, theft or perjury, though brought home to the guilty man by a judicial sentence, so far from inducing loss of caste, is visited in their society with no peculiar mark of infamy or disgrace. A trifling present to the Brahmin, commonly called *Prayaschitta*, with the performance of a few idle ceremonies, is held as sufficient atonement for all those crimes; and the delinquent is at once freed from all temporal inconvenience as well as dread of future retribution."*

The plant Tulasi is sacred with the Vaisnavas and the Bel tree with the Saivas. Regarded in the light of simple devotion and as possessed of emblematic significance, these plants have a charm for the Hindus which is indescribable. When the pious wife lights the evening lamp at the foot of the sacred Tulsi, the darkness of the evening yields to that quiet light showing through the leaves and the vermilion-marked forehead bends low in act of obeisance to the deity whose symbol it is, the small scene breathes poetry to the soul which feels in its presence as before some altar: but when the atrocious Brahminic code lays down "the great sinner who seeing a *Bilva* tree or a *Tulasi* plant does not instantly bow down will be sent to hell and be afflicted with leprosy."†—the poetry and spirituality of the whole vanishes, and our mind revolts against such ordinances and feels strongly against Brahminic tyranny. The horrid hook-swinging festivity called the Charaka, the custom of throwing children to the Sagara, human sacrifices offered to Kali, and other atrocious ceremonies performed under the sanction and control of the Brahmins, compelled our enlightened rulers to check them by enacting new laws, and if the missionaries were unsparing in their abuses of our religion and called us semi-barbarous, they

* Raja Ram Mohun Roy's English works, published by Sri Kanta Roy, Vol. I, p. 203.

† "বিল্বং বা তুলসীং দৃষ্ট্বা ন নমেত্তো নরাধমঃ।
স যাতি নরকং ঘোরং মহারোগেণ পীড্যতে॥

were justified in their condemnation of the crimes that prevailed in the lower stratum of our society.

The pure faith promulgated by Chaitanya was now giving its last flicker. In the lower order of the Vaisnava community men and women mixed promiscuously and, interpreting the emblematical religion in the light of gross sensualism, preached unrestrained licentiousness; and the cries of those who were forcibly made to play *suttees*—though subdued and unheard owing to the noisy music deliberately kept to drown them, rose to heaven where the Lord heard them though men would not. The missionaries drew attention to these matters. Such were some of the superstitions and crimes that pervaded the whole of our society at the moment we are considering. Young men of the new generation, who had not fathomed the depths of religious life that still pervaded the quiet villages of Bengal in spite of their superstitions, ran to the extreme, and in the general sweep of their reformatory procedures turned their backs upon good and evil alike, indiscriminately condemning all in their own society. They did not wish to reform but aimed at totally upsetting society, which, though in its lower grades showed Brahminical craft and oppression, had in its great heights—on its topmost pinnacles, an unequalled glory which is conspicuous in the doctrines of love and renunciation inculcated by the Vedanta.

Leanings towards Christianity.

Young men saw wrongs on all sides and did not care to hear of the speculative theology of the Hindus or to have the patience to scale its great heights themselves. They felt that Christianity was better than their own religion owing to the moral principles which were a living force amongst its votaries. "Young Bengal" showed a decided leaning towards the new creed.

At this juncture stepped forward Ram Mohun Roy, born at the village of Radhanagar in the district of Hooghly in the year 1774,—the year in which the great Rama Prasad Sen died at Halisahar.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy.

(b) *A comprehensive review of his life and work.*

As I look upon the portrait of Raja Ram Mohun, with his huge turban on his head, his loose flowing garments, his dark eye-brows bent in serious thought and his brilliant eyes with their meditative look,—a voluminous book held tightly in his right hand and lips which display determination and the power of persuasive eloquence, the high forehead beaming with intellectuality,—his tall robust figure erect to its full height,—he appears to me rather as a warrior bound for the battle field, than as a pious religious man—the part he chose to play in life.

A born fighter.

He was in fact a born fighter. The combative element is not only found throughout his stupendous writings in English, Bengali, Sanskrit and Persian, but even in the hymns he offered to God. He could not forget the fighting and controversial spirit even when he was addressing praises to the Deity. Referring to the rite of *Prana pratistha* or "endowment of animation" and that of subsequently throwing the clay image in the water after the *puja* is over, Ram Mohun sings in one of his hymns "O deluded mind, whom do you invoke, and whom do you cast away." Again, dealing with the swinging ceremony in the Dolotsava he sings: "You want to swing him who moves the sun, the moon and the stars! How vain your efforts are! He who feeds the beasts, and birds, fishes and men, how absurd it is to think of feeding him! The Deity who pervades the whole universe, with what propriety can you say to him, 'stay here' (refers to the *mantra* ইহ তিষ্ঠ &c.):

"It is vain, if you do not accept the truth; it is like taking food through the nose when you are endowed with a mouth."*

* "মন একি ভ্রান্তি তোমার
আবাহন বিসর্জ্জন কর তুমি কার?
চন্দ্র সূর্য্য গ্রহ যত,
যে চালায় অবিরত,
তারে দোলাইতে কত করহ যতন।

When half a century before, Rama Prasad had composed songs in this strain, there had been a sincerity in his utterances, and there was no polemic spirit in them; he was actually engaged in all the multifarious rituals of Hindu worship, and passing through them as an orthodox Hindu, he only refreshed his consciousness of the clay image as an emblem by referring to the monotheistic views which he really held and realised through all the rites to which he had to conform outwardly. But Raja Ram Mohun had given up all such Hindu practices and declared them idolatrous. His hymn to the Deity in the passages quoted above sounds the trumpet of battle; and though he apparently applied to himself the word 'deluded,' it is really meant for those who held views in religion other than his own.

Throughout all his writings this combativeness is obvious. He probably felt it necessary for the times, believing that people had begun to accept the image as God Himself and forget that it was a mere emblem.

As a combatant he was superior to most who came in contact with him, not only by the strong and forcible manner in which he marshalled his arguments, based on a learning which was most extraordinary, but in the equanimity of temper that he preserved throughout all controversy. Seldom or never did he resort to the language of abuse so freely indulged in against him by his opponents. He was master of many languages,—Hebrew, Greek, Persian, English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Hindusthani and Bengali, and knew something of French besides. The missionaries found in him a scholar who could point out flaws in their translations of the Bible and refer them to the original text in

পশুপক্ষী জলচরে, যে আহার দেয় নরে,
চাহ সেই পরাৎপর করাতে ভোজন।
যে বিভু সর্ব্বত্র থাকে
ইহ তিঁহ বল তাঁকে "
" সত্য সূচনা বিনা সকলি বৃথায়
যেমন বদন থাকিতে অঙ্গন করা নাসিকায়।"

Hebrew, or Greek.* His antagonists were generally brought to their knees by the solid learning of the Raja who, with all respect for the scriptures of different religions, assailed his opponents with ample quotations from the books held sacred by them, and beat them on their own ground in the most effective way. In fact his giant intellect struck every one with the sense of his superiority, and the testimonies of admiration left by Europeans are even more laudatory than those which he received from his own countrymen. Sir John Bowring, while greeting him with an address of welcome from the Unitarian Society of London, said, "I recollect some writers have indulged themselves with inquiring, what they should feel, if any of those time-honoured men, whose names have lived through vicissitudes of ages, should appear among them. They have endeavoured to imagine what would be their sensations if a Plato, or a Socrates, a Milton or a Newton, were unexpectedly to honour them with their presence. I recollect that a poet, who has well been called divine, has drawn a beautiful picture of the feelings of those who first visited the scenes of the southern hemisphere, and there saw, for the first time, that beautiful constellation, the Gold Cross. It was with feelings such as they underwent, that I was overwhelmed when I stretched out in your name the hand of welcome to the Raja Ram Mohun Roy."†

His European admirers.

Dr. Booth, an American physician of London, wrote to Mr. Estlin on the 27th November, 1833, "I have studied his (Raja Ram Mohun Roy's) writings with a subdued feeling since his death and risen from their perusal with a more confirmed conviction of his having been unequalled in past or present time."‡ The Rev. J. Scott Porter said in a funeral sermon on the death of the Raja—preached in the meeting-house of the first

* "He argues the matter very fairly and quotes with great ease and fluency the passages of both Old and New Testaments explaining some maltranslations of Hebrew which Trinitarians sometimes urged in their favour."—Monthly Repository, 1822, p. 754.

† Monthly Repository, June, 1831, Vol. V, pp. 417-20.

‡ Last days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy by Mary Carpenter, p. 174.

Presbyterian congregation, Belfast, on the 10th of November, 1833:—"Never have I known a person who brought a greater variety of knowledge to bear upon almost every topic on which he conversed, never one whose remarks were more original, solid and useful.....,—one of the most extraordinary men whom the world has witnessed for centuries."* The Rev. J. Fox spoke of the Raja in his sermon delivered at Finsbury Chapel, South Place, on Sunday, October 14, 1833, "His presence has passed away as a poetic image fades from the brain!.....And, being dead, he yet speaketh with a voice to which not only India but Europe and America will listen for generations."† The Rev. R. Aspland preached a funeral sermon in the New Gravel Pit Meeting, Hackney, in the course of which he said "the name of Ram Mohun Roy will endure as long as the history of religious truth."‡ Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzclarence, later Earl of Munster, wrote (in his Journal of a Route across India through Egypt to England in the years 1817 and 1818): "The most extraordinary Brahmin.....His learning is most extensive, as he is not only conversant with the best books in English, Arabic, Sanskrit, Bengali and Hindusthani but has even studied rhetoric in Arabic and English, and quotes Locke and Bacon on all occasions."§ The English editor of the *India Gazette* referred to him while writing about his controversy with Dr. Marshman as "a most gigantic combatant in the theological field."‖ Many English writers wrote verses on his death, and those by Miss Dale, Miss Acland, Mrs. Thomas Woodforde, the Rev. W. J. Fox, and Dr. Carpenter, quoted in, 'The Last Days of the Raja Rama Mohana Roy' by Mary Carpenter, are not only exquisite as pieces of poetic composition, but also breathe those sentiments of profound love and respect, which his great personal-

* Last days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, p. 223.
† Do. do. do. 242.
‡ Do. do. do. 207.
§ Do. do. do. 40.
‖ Do. do. do. 17.

ity raised in the minds of all who came in contact with him. The tender care with which he was attended by the ladies at Stapleton Grove during his last illness, and their tears at his death, lend deep pathos to the description of the scene of his death at Bristol and our heart goes forth in gratitude to those kind friends of a foreign clime who not only appreciated the noble qualities of the great Indian but felt for him a veneration which annulled all distinctions of birth and associations.

In his controversies with the Serampore Missionaries, some of whom went to the length of calling him a heathen, his mild answers bearing the impress of superior reasoning power, showed that he was a far better Christian in spirit than his adversaries; and the impression they made on the mind of the distinguished William Roscoe, who poured over the Raja's Precepts of Jesus with admiring delight, amply testifies to the great appreciation of his writings throughout the whole of Christendom. Mr. Recorder Hill writes about his encounter with the celebrated Robert Owen* :—"one of the guests was Robert Owen who evinced a strong desire to bring over the Raja to his socialistic opinions. He persevered with great earnestness, but the Raja, who seemed well acquainted with the subject and who spoke our language in marvellous perfection, answered his arguments with consummate skill, until Robert somewhat lost his temper,—a very rare occurrence which I never witnessed before. The defeat of the kind-hearted philanthropist was accompanied with great sauvity on the part of his opponent." Dr. T. Boot wrote about the Raja to Mr. Estlin in November 1833 :—"To me he stood in the single majesty of, I had almost said, perfect humanity, no one in the past or present ever came to my judgment clothed in such wisdom, or humility." Another Englishman spoke of him as "a rare combatant. We are constrained to say he has not met with his match here." "It is well

Robert Owen's defeat.

Other European admirers.

* Last days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, p. 111.

known" writes Mary Carpenter (p. 252) "that Mr. William Adam, a Baptist of Serampore, who endeavoured to make him a convert to orthodoxy, concluded his task by acknowledging himself a convert to the true Evangelical opinions of the Raja." The greatest philosopher of England at the time, Jeremy Bentham, gave him a cordial reception and addressed him as "intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind." "Your works," wrote Bentham to the Raja, "are made known to me by a book in which I read a style which, but for the name of a Hindu, I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman" and in the same letter while praising the great work of James Mill on the History of India, Bentham remarked, "though as to the style I wish I could with truth and sincerity pronounce it equal to yours."* The poet Campbell was also one of his great admirers. When he landed in England the Raja met with a reception which only the most exalted men of Europe could expect to receive. He was presented to His Majesty the King by the President of the Board of Control and had a place assigned to him among the foreign ambassadors. The highest honours were publicly accorded to him. "Persons most remarkable for their social standing and literary eminence sought his society and highly esteemed the privilege of intercourse with him. He was received into our English homes not only as a distinguished guest but as a friend."† During his short stay at Paris he was more than once at the table of Louis Philippe. Wherever he went he had to attend meetings according him a most hearty and cordial reception. Mary Carpenter writes that she herself met some of those "who still treasured the remembrance of the Raja; one of these, now a greyheaded man, recollected when a young midshipman on arriving at Calcutta, going to visit the magnificent residence and grounds of the Brahmin who was even

Reception in Europe.

A midshipman's recollections.

* Bowring's works of Bentham, Vol. X, p. 586.

† Mary Carpenter's Life of the Raja, p. 65.

then celebrated. It was in the Circular Road at the Eastern extremity of the town. He did not see the master of the mansion, but he picked up in the large aviary a relic in remembrance of the distinguished man which he still treasures."*

Social and religious reformation he chose as the chief object of his pursuit. His evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons in England regarding the Judicial and Revenue system of India and his essay on the European colonisation show a masterly grasp of the subject as also the vast range of his study and minute observation in every detail of the administrative questions of the country, upon which the British press bestowed at the time their highest encomiums. His writing materially assisted Government in enacting legislation for the administration of the country on a more solid and efficacious basis. His letter on the question of education preceded the memorable minute of Lord Macaulay and sounded the key-note of the future educational policy of the Government.

Evidence before the Select Committee.

On Education.

In fact in every department of thought, calculated to advance the cause of his countrymen, his great intelligence and zealous advocacy of all that he considered right have left a powerful impress. In all movements, whether of social or political nature, the start that he gave to the enlightened Hindu Society of Bengal has kept it going forward up to the present. Thoroughly acquainted with the political conditions in Europe, the sympathy of his great mind went forth to the cause of liberty and freedom, wherever it was at stake. His human feelings were also as cosmopolitan. When on one occasion he attended divine worship at Carter Lane Chapel, the Minister was reading a letter from a clergyman in that quarter describing the sufferings of the poor people in the west of Ireland, then in a state of lamentable distress. Writes Mr. Poter on the occasion: "the tears that fell from his (Raja's)

Broad sympathy and cosmopolitan views.

* Mary Carpenter's Life of the Raja, p. 67

eyes declared how deeply he was moved by the reciter."* He materially contributed to the fund collected for affording them relief.

For women the sympathy of his heart was ever in readiness; and one, who reads his arguments in favour of the abolition of Suttee, cannot but be struck with the great humanity with which he advocated the cause, as also with the high reverence in which he held Indian women. When a pro-Sutee champion declared woman-kind as weak, frail and irreligious, his honest indignation burst forth in a glorious speech in which the sufferings, the devotion and the firmness of Hindu women are so vividly represented that no poet could do it in better language or in more effective form. He suffered all kinds of persecution, intolerence and abuses from his opponents who even tried to waylay and belabour him, but reading his answers to the charges made against him by orthodox Hindus, and even by the clergy, one is struck with his gentle and persuasive eloquence, his kindly words indicating a sweet and unruffled temper. These are found in sharp contrast to the foul and wanton abuse of his antagonists. He himself says in some of his answers that as a child frets, when the well-meaning doctor gives him medicine, but the doctor heeds it not, even so does he treat those who without understanding his good intentions are crying down his works. He was never weary of arguing in favour of what he considered to be the truth. Such an untiring champion of truth is scarcely to be met with now. Mr. Arnot writes of him, "During the greater part of the period of Rama Mohana Roy's residence at Calcutta, the whole powers of his mind were directed to the vindication of the doctrine of the unity of God. In this, he maintained the sacred books of the Hindus and Mussalmans, Jews and Christians agreed; and that

Good for evil.

Vindicates the unity of God.

* Carpenter's "Last days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy," p. 225.

all apparent deviations from it were modern corruptions. He propagated it day and night by word and writings, with the zeal of an apostle and the self-denial of a martyr. He was ever ready to maintain it against all gain-sayers, from the believer in thirty three millions of God to the denier of one, for both extremes are common in the East. The writer remembers finding him at his Garden House near Calcutta, one evening, about 7 o'clock, closing a dispute with one of the followers of Buddha, who denied the existence of the Deity. The Raja had spent the whole day in the controversy, without stopping for food, rest or refreshment, rejoicing more in confuting one atheist than in triumphing over hundred idolators: the credulity of the one he despised; the scepticism of the other he thougth pernicious; for he was deeply impressed with the importance of religion for the virtue and happiness of mankind."*

His pro-Christian tendencies are well known. Yet he would not agree with the missionaries in their orthodox views. When the Serampore missionaries advanced their arguments in support of the miracles of Christ, the Raja quietly remarked:—"His miracles were less stupendous than those of the Hindu who drank up the ocean and discharged it from his body."† Though attacking the idolatrous practices of the Hindus, the Raja boldly declared his profound respect for the Hindu philosophy before his European friends. An English writer writes, "he (the Raja) asserts that he has found nothing in European books equal to the scholastic philosophy of the Hindus."‡

Rejects miracles

Respect for Hindu philosophy.

He combined in himself the best elements of European and Asian ideals. In spirituality he was a Vedantist and in morality he was a follower of Christ.

* Miss Marry Carpenter,—Last days in England. p. 299.
† History of Srirampur Mission, Vol. I, p. 238.
‡ Monthly Repository 1818, Vol. XV, pp. 2-4.

The extraordinary man, with his noble efforts in all works of reformation did a great service to the cause of Bengali literature to which we shall refer hereafter. We here briefly give a sketch of his life as narrated by himself.

An autobiographical account.

"My ancestors were Brahmins of a high order and, from time immemorial were devoted to the religious duties of their race, down to my fifth progenitor, who, about one hundred and forty years ago, gave up spiritual exercises for worldly pursuits and aggrandisements. His descendants ever since have followed his example and according to the usual fate of courtiers, with various successes, sometimes rising to honour and sometimes falling; sometimes rich and sometimes poor; sometimes excelling in success, sometimes miserable through disappointment. But my maternal ancestors, being of the sacerdotal order by profession as well as by birth, and of a family than which none holds a higher rank in that profession, have up to the present day adhered to a life of religious observances, and devotion, preferring peace and tranquillity of mind to the excitements of worldly grandeur.

"In conformity with the usage of my paternal race, and the wish of my father, I studied the Persian and Arabic languages, —these being indispensable to those who attached themselves to the courts of the Mahomedan princes and agreeably to the usage of my maternal relations, I devoted myself to the study of Sanskrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of Hindu literature, law and religion.

"When about the age of sixteen, I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within but some beyond the bounds of Hindustan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of British power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my

father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants; and I enjoyed the confidence of several of them even in their public capacity. My continued controversies with the Brahmins on the subject of their idolatry and superstition, and my interference with their custom of burning widows, and other pernicious practices, revived and increased their animosity against me; and through their influence with my family my father was again obliged to withdraw his countenance openly, though his limited pecuniary support was still continued to me.

"After my father's death I opposed the advocates of idolatry with still greater boldness. Availing myself of the art of printing, now established in India, I publised various works and pamphlets against their errors in the native and foreign languages. This raised such a feeling against me, that I was at last deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends, to whom, and the nation to which they belong, I will always feel grateful.

"The ground which I took in all controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahminism was contrary to the practice of their ancestors, and the principles of the ancient books and authorities which they profess to revere and obey. Notwithstanding the violence of the opposition and resistance to my opinions, several highly respectable persons, both among my own relations and others began to abopt the same sentiments.

"I now felt a strong wish to visit Europe and obtain, by personal observation, a more thorough insight into its manners,

customs, religion and political institutions. I refrained however, from carrying this intention into effect until the friends who coincided with my sentiments should be increased in number and strength. My expectations having been at length realised in November, 1830, I embarked for England, as the discussion of the East India Company's Charter was expected to come on, by which the treatment of the natives of India and its future government would be determined for many years to come and an appeal to the King in Council against the abolition of the practice of burning widows was to be heard before the Privy Council; and His Majesty the Emperor of Delhi had likewise commissioned me to bring before the authorities in England certain encroachments on his rights by the East India Company. I accordingly arrived in England in April, 1831."*

Ram Mohan Roy was requested to give his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the judicial and revenue systems of India. He was also examined on the condition of the native inhabitants of India. His answers, as already mentioned, were remarkable as showing his great command over the subjects in which he was thus consulted. Through his earnest attempts the appeal against the abolition of Suttee was rejected on the 11th of July, 1832. After a residence of three years in Europe Raja Ram Mohan Roy died at Bristol on the 27th of September, 1833.†

His work in England

and death.

How far the Raja's strenuous and self-sacrificing efforts against idolatry may have succeeded will engage us for a few

* Miss Carpenter introduced this Autobiographical sketch into her book 'Last Days in England of Raja Ram Mohan Roy' with the following remarks :—

"The following letter from Rama Mohana Roy himself first appeared in the 'Athenæum' and in the Literary Gazette, from one or other of which it was copied into various papers. It was written just before he went to France. It was probably designed for some distinguished person who had desired him to give an outline of his history; and he adopted this form for the purpose. The letter may be considered as addressed to his friend Mr. Gordon of Calcutta."

† English works of Raja Rama Mohana Roy, vol. I, page 5.

Gods and goddesses of the Hindus.

moments. As a heated controversy was going on in the vernacular tongue on this point, we consider ourselves justified in summarising here the arguments advanced by the other side. From the time of the *Risis*, when Usas appeared to them as a beautiful nymph of the horizon clothed in purple apparel, down to the days of the *Puranas*, the religious history of India has been one in which monotheism has constantly adopted the garb of allegory, in order to appeal more potently to popular minds; and the vast pantheon of the Hindu gods and goddesses have an emblematical significance which has been repeatedly emphasised by the writers of theological treatises. The Raja himself admitted "there can be no doubt however, and it is my whole desire to prove, that every rite has its derivation from the allegorical adoration of the deity, but at the present day all is forgotten;"* and again "many learned Brahmins are well informed of the pure mode of divine worship."*

The position taken by his opponents was not without a rational basis; and the controversy was as interesting as it was learned. In the spiritual world, as in poetry and even in Mathematics, the symol is adopted for convenience. As in the geometrical definition of a line or point the basis is taken for granted, or as in the play of Hamlet the historic facts need not be authentic, so in any subject the ground-work may always be called in question; but the stupendous facts which rest upon it are not therefore to be ignored or undervalued. The whole civilisation of the Hindus, their vast poetic literature, their architectural achievements, shrines, temples, the geography of India as revealed to them in a spiritual light—the sacred Ganges, the Godavari, the Brahmaputra, the snow-topped Himalaya and the Vindhya hills, all are associated with religious stories and episodes, underlying which there is the Vedanta Philosophy which invests external forms with spiritual truth; and the idea of the Supreme Being permeates all that may superficially strike us as irrational.

* *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 127.

From the lays of Jayadeva, Chandi Das and Vidyapati to the *Kirtan* and the *Agamani* songs of Bengal, our whole vast lore of devotional sentiment is no literary curiosity to our people;—it is a perpetual fountain of faith to the humble as well as to the enlightened. The gods and goddesses of the Puranas, like the Usas of the *Risis*, represent the attributes of one who attracts us through their familiar forms even as the sun approaches us through a thousand rays of light. This vast religious fabric was not created in a day. It has taken deep root in our soil for hundreds of years. Such gods as these could not be dismissed at a word, however great might be the power that cried to them 'Vanish!' Even when Raja Ram Mohan Roy was decrying what he called idolatry in unsparing language, there were already Europeans who were attracted by it,—nay had adopted the 'idolatrous practices' themselves. The facts disclosed by the extracts quoted below should be judged independently. The comments made on them are what one naturally expects from the biased persons from whose writings they are taken.

European converts to Hinduism.

"Mr. Twining and Major Scott Waring were joined in their missionary crusade by a colleague in the person of a "Bengal officer," Col. Stewart, generally known in India under the name of "Hindu Stewart." He had abjured Christianity and become a worshipper of the Hindu deities. He exposed himself equally to the ridicule of his own countrymen, by going down in the morning to the Ganges, with flowers and sacrificial vessels, to perform his ablutions according to the Hindu rituals. At a subsequent period, he asked permission to accompany the army in its progress towards the capital of Nepal, that he might have an opportunity of paying his devotion at a celebrated shrine of Siva which lay on the route..... The Bengal officer exhibited the most profound respect for the Hindu religion, and entertained the most lofty conceptions of the morals and virtues of the Hindus; and he now came forward to denounce the sacrilegious attack of the

Hindu Stewart.

missionaries 'on the sacred and venerable fabric of Hinduism.' In his pamphlet called 'The Bengal Officer's Pamphlet,' published in 1808, he says, "wherever I look around me in the vast region of Hindu mythology, I discover piety in the garb of allegory: and I see morality, at every turn blended with every fable; and as far as I can rely on my judgement, it appears the most complete and ample system of Moral Allegory that the world has ever produced."*

We find from the introduction to Abridgement of Vedanta by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, published in 1816, that he attacked "that system of popular idolatry on which Sir Thomas Munro, and Mr. Lushington, and Mr. Marsh had bestowed the highest eulogium three years before in the presence of the Parliament."†

Mr. W. Ward of the Seramapore Mission seemed to be particularly hostile to any who advocated the cause of Hinduism. In his work on the Hindus, he writes, "The Rev. Maurice has attempted to describe the Hindu ceremonies in the most florid colours. It might have been expected, (idolatry being in itself an act so degrading to man and so dishonourable to God) that a Christian Divine would have been shocked while writing in this manner. If Mr. Maurice thinks there is something in Hinduism to excite the most sublime ideas, let him come and join in the dance before the idol or assist the Brahmins in crying Huree bul: Huree bul!"‡

Mr. Maurice on Hinduism.

From this Mr. Maurice himself, we quote the following interesting and sympathetic passage. "Mr. Forbes of Stanmore Hill in his elegant museum of Indian rarities numbers two of the bells that have been used in devotion by the Brahmins, as great curiosities, and one of them in particular appears to be of very high antiquity, in form very much resembling the cup of the lotus, and the tune of it was uncommonly soft and melodious. I could not avoid being deeply

* History of the Sriramapore Mission by John Clark Marshman, Vol. I, pp. 354-56

† History of the Sriramapore Mission, Vol. II, p. 128

‡ Introductory Remarks, Ward's 'On Hindus,' Vol. II, p. lxxv.

affected with the sound of an instrument which had been actually employed to kindle the flame of that superstition, which I have attempted to unfold. My transported thoughts travelled back to the remote period when the Brahmin religion blazed forth in all its splendour in the caverns of Elephanta: I was, for a moment, entranced and caught the ardour of enthusiasm. A tribe of venerable priests, arrayed in flowing stoles and decorated with high tiaras, seemed assembled around me, the mystic song of initiation vibrated in my ear; I breathed an air, fragrant with the richest perfumes and contemplated the deity in the fire that symbolised him." Dr. Ward quotes this passage from an article written by the Rev. Maurice in the fifth volume of "Indian Antiquities" and treats it with great contempt. But it is the last part of the article which most of all annoys him. This runs as follows:

"She (the Hindu religion) wears the similitude of a beautiful and radiant cherub from heaven, bearing on her persuasive lips the accents of pardon and peace, and on her silken wings benefaction and blessing."*

Pro-Hindu tendencies of Halhed and Jones

Dr. Ward also finds faults with Mr. Halhed of the Civil Service, the first writer on Bengali grammar, because he "seems to prefer Hinduism to Christianity;" and condemns even Sir William Jones for his pro-Hindu tendencies. The great scholar was, according to the critic, "accustomed to study the Sastras with the image of a Hindu god placed on his table."

The Hindus were never known to possess any proselytising zeal; yet the poetry and devotion which pervaded the allegorical mode of their worship could not fail to commend itself to many an enlightened European who would openly avow his partiality for it. These foreign admirers of our religion were Raja Ram Mohan's contemporaries—a circumstance which shows that the Hindu religion in Bengal had not yet sunk into utter gross-

* 'Ward's 'On the Hindus,' Vol. II, Introduction, Page lxxvi.

ness as it was represented to have done by its reformers; for, in that case it could not have counted its votaries among the Europeans who lived in the country. Almost a century has passed since Ram Mohan Roy breathed his last. The incense still burns in the Hindu temples at the time of the *Arati* or evening service: the village potters still prepare clay images of the gods. The auspicious sound of the evening conch still resounds beyond the temples across our fields and lawns. The sacred books Bhagavata, Chandi and other Puranas, still find hundreds of listeners, whose love is far more ennobling than if the works had possessed a merely literary interest and how dreary would be the Hindu home without these things! To me it appears that if the allegorical forms of our religion were all swept away, the whole Hindu civilisation, intervening between the period of the Vedas and that of Ramkrisna Paramahansa's sayings, would be overthrown, and the spiritual soul of India, thousands of years old, would have to be born anew, as a child of to-day, losing the benefit of the heritage transmitted by our forefathers through the ages of the past.

Hinduism in our village-home.

But has the Raja's mission failed in its attempt to lead our society to a realisation of the truth that symbols are not to be mistaken for realities and that the deity is not to be confounded with them? Every right-thinking man must emphatically say 'no' to this enquiry. The enlightened Hindu youth of the present day has reverted to the Vedanta Philosophy; and the movements of the revivalists, though often displaying ridiculous niceties in their metaphysical interpretations, have constantly aimed at taking a rational and sensible view of matters. The modern Hindu is not the Hindu of the old school. In the general awakening of the intellect and in the widening of the search after spiritual truth which followed Raja Ram Mohan Roy's advent, the Hindus have not neglected to make their position secure by studying the Sastras in a new light; it has been a point of their constant efforts to interpret rationally what a great number of people of the preceding generations did blindly.

The success of the Raja's mission

The Raja has therefore been directly instrumental in helping the cause of monotheism by founding the Brahmo Samaj, and indirectly by giving a stimulus to Hindu Society, which in its anxiety to defend itself against the Rationalists, soon came forward to propound myths about the gods in accordance with monotheistic principles, for which, however, it had ample authority in its scriptures. Like all great men the Raja came to minister to a real need of society. It may be that the enlightened people of Bengal would, without him, have been drawn more irrevocably to Christianity, being dissatisfied with the existing state of their religion. The spirit of the Raja not only dominates the Brahmo Samaj of to-day, but his influence is distinctly traceable in the general awakening of the Hindu mind to a consciousness of new ideals in the spiritual world.

This great man approached his countrymen through the vehicle of his mother tongue. Before Ram Mohan the prose literature that existed was of very minor importance. The Europeans had already set themselves the task of compiling Bengali Grammar and vocabularies. They had begun to translate the Gospel, and those placed at the head of judicial administration had found it expedient to translate the Laws and Regulations into the vernacular. There was a general activity in Bengal among an enlighened though limited circle of men to contribute to our prose literature—an activity which, as I have said in a foregoing chapter, was largely due to the energetic efforts of missionaries in bringing home to the people the truth of the Bible, as also to their sincere desire to promote the condition of our countrymen by a diffusion of western education. Ram Mohan Roy is generally known as the father of the Bengali prose; but we have seen that some of the earliest writings in Bengali, composed in the 10th century A.D., were in prose. Small and even large treatises were written in simple Bengali prose before the advent of the Europeans. The assertion of "fatherhood" therefore cannot be countenanced. Even before any book had been published in Bengali prose except

The Raja's work in Bengali prose

'The father of Bengali prose.

the Regulations and Vocabularies, Rama Rama Vasu's *Pratapaditya Charit* came out in the year 1800. It has been urged by many people that Ram Mohan Roy in his sixteenth year (1790 A.D.) wrote a book in Bengali prose "against idolatry of all religions." True, he wrote a pamphlet bearing that name, but it was written in Persian with an Arabic preface. The Vedanta Sutra was his first work in Bengali, and this appeared in 1815. In the Vedanta Sutra he himself refers to a translation of *Bhasaparichchheda* in Bengali prose as having already existed before he began to write in Bengali.* We have mentioned several translations of the above work on Logic, while dealing with the old Bengali literature. If one reads the translations of the Bhasaparichchheda, the latest of which was written nearly a century before Ram Mohan Roy's Vedanta Sutra, one will be struck with the similarity of language in the above treatises with the style of Ram Mohan Roy. The missionaries had taken up Bengali, in right earnest, and they had required no impetus from the Raja in adopting the vernacular prose as the medium through which to approach the people of Bengal.

But all these considerations hardly detract from the glory which attaches to the name of Raja Ram Mohan Roy for his furtherance of the cause of Bengali prose. The literary works by Europeans in Bengali were mostly translations, and whatever credit and reverence may be due to these authors for undertaking a task which required them to overcome the difficulties of a foreign tongue and master its idioms, their works, judged from the standpoint of pure merit, have, we are constrained to observe, no great attraction. They scarcely rise above the level of school-books. They were pioneers in the field of their labours, so we need not underrate their laudable efforts ; but except awakening the Hindu mind to a sense of its own duty in literature and diverting it into practical channels, their productions have not served any essential or permanent purpose. These works will,

* Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Bengali Works, p. 267.

in time to come, be looked upon merely as literary curiosities, to be preserved on the shelf amongst old and rare books.

Their Bengali imitators set themselves mostly the task of compiling and translating English works, which though extremely necessary at that early period of the diffusion of western education, possess no remarkable merit or permanent interest. The whole of this period in the history of our literature, in spite of its great activity diverted to useful purposes, strikes us as singularly barren of originality; and the greatest productions then worked out, though they required years of patient and indefatigable industry, are no landmarks in the history of our progress; and our minds, while full of admiration for the noble band of writers, involuntarily turn to the old literature for the gratification of those desires which true and original composition can alone fulfil. There was much in the prose writings of this age to interest the intellect but little to give pleasure or satisfaction to the soul.

The Bengali Works of the Raja.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy rose on the horizon of our letters at this stage, and all lesser lights grew dim at his advent. The whole aspect of our literature became changed. He wrote the following books in Bengali:—

1. Vedanta Sutra. Quarto size, 114 pages, 1815 A.D.
2. Vedanta Sutra, 15 pages, 1815.
3. Talavakara Upanisad, 11 pages, 1816.
4. Isopanisad, 24 pages, 1816.
5. Sahamarana Visaya (on the Suttee), Part I, 33 pages, and Part II, 12 pages, 1819.
6. Do. Part III, 21 pages, 1829.
7. Pathya Pradana, 139 pages, 1823.
8. Brahmanistha Grihasther Laksana, 5 pages, 1826.
9. Kayasther Sahita Madyapana Visayaka Vichara, 4 pages, 1826.
10. Vajra Suchi, 6 pages, 1830.
11. Anusthana, 13 pages, 1829.
12. Subrahmanya Sastrir Sahita Vichara, 5 pages.

13. Parthana Patra, 3 pages.
14. Atmanatma Viveka, 17 pages.
15. Brahmana Sevadhi, 38 pages, 1821.
16. Padri O Sisya Samvada, 4 pages.
17. Brahma Samgita, 116 songs.
18. Brahmopasana, 3 pages.
19. Gayatrir Artha, 7 pages, 1818.
20. Kathopanisad, 34 pages, 1817.
21. Mundakopanisad, 9 pages.
22. Mandukyopanisad, 26 pages, 1819.
23. Gosvamir Sahita Vichara, 30 pages, 1818.
24. Kavitakarer Sahita Vichara, 35 pages, 1821.
25. Bhattacaryyer Sahita Vichara, 80 pages, 1817.
26. Gauriya Vyakarana, 80 pages, 1833.
27. Samvada Kaumudi, 20 pages.

The English works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy have been edited by Jogendra Chandra Ghose, M.A., B.L., and published by Srikanta Roy of Calcutta in three volumes.

The Bengali works of the Raja referred to above, were collected and published by Rajnarayan Vasu and Ananda Chandra Tarkavagis in 1873. The collection contains over 800 pages (quarto size). Most of his Bengali treatises are short; but the vast learning which he displays in each of these productions, together with the closeness of argument and sincere and ardent desire for truth, lends them an importance second to none in our literature. His interpretation of the Vedanta, chiefly based on the commentary of Sankaracharyya, gives in lucid Bengali prose what would be impossible for any other person of his age to have done in the vernacular. The intricacies of one of the most abstruse subjects that ever engaged the human intellect,—the difficulties of a language whose prose was not yet properly formed, were all overcome, and the truths of the great Philosophy were brought within the easy reach of every man of ordinary intelligence in a masterly way. The Raja, like a *Risi*, realised the truths of the

Their merit.

Vedanta and expressed them from his own soul through his vernacular writings. We repeat that it would have been impossible for any other man of his age, however learned, to have reduced such great and abstruse truths to pristine simplicity in a language which as yet was so inadequate to the purpose as our own. It was possible for the Raja to do so only because he was himself a seer of these truths like the great sages—the *Risis* of the past.

His controversies similarly display his great powers, his logical acumen, and his vast classical erudition. He gives precedence to reason in every step of his arguments; and it is the light of his own soul that he brings forward, in order to dispel the darkness of superstition and ignorance that prevails all around. Nowhere does he make his motive prominent. He brings forward a whole array of texts from Sanskrit, Hebrew, Persian and Arabic in favour of what he advocates, so that while arguing with a Maulvi he seems to be himself a Maulvi, with a missionary, he appears to be a Christian, and before a Bhattacharyya he comes in the garb of the Brahmin that he was. While holding a controversy with a Muhammadan, the Raja quotes from the Koran, with a Hindu from the Sastras, and with a Christian from the Bible. He does not decry even the most obvious evils on his own authority, but he brings his whole learning to bear upon each topic; and the quotations he makes are of an overwhelming nature and display his minute knowledge of the different theological systems of the world. This power of keeping his personal opinions in the background and advancing them merely on the authority admitted by his antagonists, required a colossal range of studies which in his age only Ram Mohan Roy possessed. This accounts for his unique position and his great ascendency over his rivals in discussion. Another noteworthy feature in his writings is the entire absence of any outburst of feeling. It might have been supposed that a man who so deeply felt the wrongs that prevailed all around, would denounce them in the fiery language of an ardent enthusiast in the cause of reformation. But his great intellectuality and deep conviction made him proceed quietly in

controversy, like a doctor in the process of a serious surgical operation; occasions, however serious, did not disturb his temper. This superior control over himself is to be traced distinctly in all his writings. What was said of some of his English works by his English reviewer in the Monthly Repository for September, 1833, applies equally to his Bengali writings also. "The method and coolness with which the Raja arranges and states his facts, in contrast with the rousing nature of those facts, are as remarkable as anything in the whole affair: and the courtesy with which he accounts, where he can, for the rise and growth of abuses, will not impede, but hasten the rectification of those abuses. The Raja appreciates too well the nature and operation of free institutions not to have felt many a throb of indignation, many a pang of grief, when witnessing the oppressed condition of the ryots of his country, and the various kinds and degrees of guilt among his countrymen, which have been originated by British misgovernment: but when the cause can be best served by a plain statement of facts, he can adduce them with all the calmness of a mere observer. That which it makes our spirits sink to read, he states unaccompanied by reproach or entreaty. Suggestions on which we should stake our lives, and which we should be apt to thrust in the face of friend and foe, he offers in their due connection, and with a moderation most likely to ensure them a hearing."

However trivial or puerile were the charges made against him, he listened to every point urged by his opponents with great attention, and in his anxious solicitude to bring conviction of the truth home to the party, he gave a sensible reply to their foolish abuses and revilings prompted by animosity, with a surprising quietness of temper. I quote a passage from one of his Bengali writings:

Extracts from his Bengali prose

* "The first argument in support of idolatry, is that the Supreme Being is beyond all power of human comprehension and cannot be expressed by

* "প্রথমত: এই যাহাকে ব্রহ্ম জগৎকর্ত্তা কহ তিহোঁ বাক্য মনের অগোচর সুতরাং তাহার উপাসনা অসম্ভব হয় এই নিমিত্ত কোনরূপ গুণবিশিষ্টকে জগতের কর্ত্তা জানিয়া

words; hence the necessity of worshipping a Deity endowed with form and other attributes, as Master of the universe. The plain answer to this is:—If a person in his early childhood, before he has had any knowledge of his father, is kidnapped, or by other causes separated from home, would it be proper for him, when growing into manhood, to call some object before him his father? Rather should he not, when observing a religious ceremony or engaged in a prayer for the good of his father,—say 'Peace be unto him who has begotten me!' In the same way, it should be understood, though the Divine Being may be incomprehensible to us, that we may always address Him as the creator and preserver of the universe without giving Him fictitious attributes and a fancied name. The quality and nature of many objects of creation,—such as the sun or the moon, are not fully known to us; how is it then possible for us to know the nature of the Creator! But observing the objects around us, and the laws which govern the universe, we are conscious of His omnipotence and of His divine dispensation which is good for all; and with such a consciousness we are always quite free to approach him. Our commonsense tells us that the creator is mightier than his

উপাসনা না করিলে নির্ব্বাহ হইতে পারে নাই অতএব রূপগুণ বিশিষ্টের উপাসনা আবশ্যক হয়। ইহার সামান্য উত্তর এই। যে কোন ব্যক্তি বাল্যকালে শত্রুগ্রস্ত এবং দেশান্তর হইয়া আপনার পিতার নিরূপণ কিছু জানে নাই এ নিমিত্ত সে ব্যক্তি যুবা হইলে পরে যে কোন বস্তু সম্মুখে পাইবেক তাহাকে পিতারূপে গ্রহণ করিবেক এমত নহে বরঞ্চ সেই ব্যক্তি পিতার উদ্দেশে কোন ক্রিয়া করিবার সময়ে অথবা পিতার মঙ্গল প্রার্থনা করিবার কালে এই কহে যে যে জন জন্মদাতা তাঁহার শ্রেয়ঃ হউক। সেই মত এখানেও জানিবে যে ব্রহ্মের স্বরূপ জ্ঞেয় নহে কিন্তু তাঁহার উপাসনা কালে তাঁহাকে জগতের স্রষ্টা পাতা সংহর্ত্তা ইত্যাদি বিশেষণের দ্বারা লক্ষ্য করিতে হয় তাহার কল্পনা কোন নশ্বর নাম রূপে কিরূপ করা যাইতে পারে। সর্ব্বদা যে সকল বস্তু যেমন চন্দ্র সূর্য্যাদি আমরা দেখি ও তাহার দ্বারা ব্যবহার নিষ্পন্ন করি তাহারো যথার্থ স্বরূপ জানিতে পারি না ইহাতেই বুঝিবে যে ঈশ্বর ইন্দ্রিয়ের অগোচর তাঁহার স্বরূপ কিরূপে জানা যায় কিন্তু জগতের নানাবিধ রচনার এবং নিয়মের দৃষ্টিতে তাঁহার কর্ত্তৃত্ব এবং নিয়ন্তৃত্ব নিশ্চয় হইলে কৃতকার্য্য হইবার সম্ভব হয়। সামান্য অবধানে নিশ্চয় হয় যে এই ঐশ্বর্য্য নানা প্রকার রচনা বিশিষ্ট জগতের কর্ত্তা ইহা হইতে ব্যাপক এবং অধিক শক্তিমান অবশ্য হইবেক ইহার এক অংশ কিম্বা ইহার ব্যাপ্য কোন বস্তু ইহার

creation, and that a created object, as forming but a part of the universe, cannot be its master. The supporters of idolatry urge that the worship of an invisible power is impossible. This argument is curious, since they may observe that their own countrymen and the people of other countries have found it quite possible to pray to the invisible Deity. The second point urged is :—It is not at all worthy of a good man to leave the ways of his ancestors and of his own people and trample upon old customs.

Ans.—People seem to be carried away a good deal by their love for ancestors and kinsmen. But it is the lower animals only which altogether follow the beaten track of their own kind. How should a man, endowed with a sense of right and wrong, be justified in following a certain path merely because his forefathers adopted it? Blind faith in past authority is inadmissible with a progressing race. But in spite of their advancing this argument, we see that our countrymen never gave such absolute authority to custom in by-gone ages. Amongst the Hindus one born in a Vaisnava family is often seen to change his faith and become a Sakta ; and a Sakta is similarly observed to accept the Vaisnava faith ; within the last hundred years the people of Bengal have

কর্ত্তা কি যুক্তিতে অঙ্গীকার করা যায়। আর এক অধিক আশ্চর্য্য এই যে স্বজাতীয় বিজাতীয় অনেকেই নিরাকার ঈশ্বরের উদ্দেশে উপাসনা করিতেছেন ইহা প্রত্যক্ষ দেখিতেছেন অথচ কহিতেছেন যে নিরাকার ঈশ্বর তাঁহার উপাসনা কোন মতে হইতে পারে না॥ ২॥ দ্বিতীয় বাক্য রচনা এই যে পিতা পিতামহ এবং স্ববর্গেরা যে মতকে অবলম্বন করিয়াছেন তাহার অন্যথা করণ অতি অযোগ্য হয়। লোকসকলের পূর্ব্ব পুরুষ এবং স্ববর্গের প্রতি অত্যন্ত স্নেহ সুতরাং এ বাক্যকে পর পূর্ব্ব বিবেচনা না করিয়া প্রমাণ স্বীকার করেন ইহার সাধারণ উত্তর এই যে কেবল স্ববর্গের মত হয় এই প্রমাণে মত গ্রহণ করা পশু জাতীয়ের ধর্ম্ম হয় যে সর্ব্বদা স্ববর্গের ক্রিয়ানুসারে কার্য্য করে। মনুষ্য যাহার সৎ অসৎ বিবেচনার বুদ্ধি আছে সে কি রূপে ক্রিয়ার দোষ কি গুণ বিবেচনা না করিয়া স্ববর্গে করেন এই প্রমাণে ব্যবহার এবং পরমার্থ কার্য্যনির্ব্বাহ করিতে পারে। এইমত সর্ব্বত্র সর্ব্বকালে হইলে পর পৃথক পৃথক মত এ পর্য্যন্ত হইত না বিশেষত আপনাদের মধ্যে দেখিতেছি যে এক জন বৈষ্ণবের কুলে জন্ম লইয়া শাক্ত হইতেছে দ্বিতীয় ব্যক্তি শাক্ত কুলে বৈষ্ণব হয় আর স্মার্ত্ত ভট্টাচার্য্যের পরে যাহাকে এক শত বৎসর হয় না যাবতীয় পরমার্থ কর্ম্ম ধ্যান দান

adopted the views of Raghunandan in their religious observances, and in this respect there has been an entire deviation on their part from following the beliefs and practices of their ancestors. We read in history besides that when the five Brahmins first came to Bengal they had socks on their feet, wore coats, and they came riding in bullock carts. Such practices are now considered as sacrilegious on the part of Brahmins. In olden times Brahmins would never accept service under a *Yavana* or foreigner, nor learn any language other than the Sanskritic; they were also prohibited from teaching Sanskrit to non-Hindus; but they do all these things now. So it is evident that we have not over zealously persevered in our old customs and manners. Why, therefore, should we be led by an idle prejudice in their favour in the matter of faith itself which concerns the good of our souls and our hereafter?

The third argument in support of idolatry is that the knowledge of the Absolute makes a man unfit for all practical purposes. To him good and evil, fire and water, sweet scent and obnoxious stench become all the same as he rises above the phenomenal; such a knowledge is, therefore, not compatible with the pursuits of ordinary men.

ব্রতোপবাস প্রভৃতি পূর্ব্ব মতে ভিন্ন প্রকার হইতেছে আর সকলে কহেন যে পঞ্চ ব্রাহ্মণ যে কালে এদেশে আইসেন তাঁহাদের পায়েতে মোজা এবং জামা ইত্যাদি বেশ এবং গোযান ছিল তাহার পরে পরে সে সকল ব্যবহার কিছুই রহিল না আর ব্রাহ্মণের যবনাদির দাসত্ব করা এবং যবনকে শাস্ত্র পাঠ করান কোন্ পূর্ব্ব ধর্ম্ম ছিল। অতএব স্বর্গে যে উপাসনা ও ব্যবহার করেন তাহার ভিন্ন উপাসনা করা এবং পূর্ব্ব পূর্ব্ব নিয়মের ত্যাগ এমত বাক্যে বিশ্বাস করিয়া পরমার্থের উত্তম পথের চেষ্টা না করা যায়। তৃতীয় বাক্য এই যে ব্রহ্ম উপাসনা করিলে মনুষ্যের লৌকিক ভদ্রাভদ্র জ্ঞান থাকে না, অতএব সুতরাং ঈশ্বরের উপাসনা গৃহস্থ লোকের কিরূপে হইতে পারে। উত্তর। তাহারা কি প্রমাণে এবাক্য রচনা করেন তাহা জানিতে পারি নাই যেহেতু আপনারাই স্বীকার করেন যে নারদ জনক সনৎকুমারাদি শুক বশিষ্ঠ ব্যাস কপিল প্রভৃতি ব্রহ্মজ্ঞানী ছিলেন অথচ ইহারা অগ্নিকে অগ্নি জলকে জল ব্যবহার করিতেন এবং রাজকর্ম্ম আর গার্হস্থ্য এবং শিষ্য সকলকে জ্ঞানোপদেশ যথাযোগ্য করিতেন। তবে কিরূপে বিশ্বাস করা যায় যে ব্রহ্মজ্ঞানীর ভদ্রাভদ্রাদি জ্ঞান কিছুই থাকে নাই আর কিরূপে এ কথার আদর লোকে করেন তাহা জানিতে পারি না। বিশেষতঃ আশ্চর্য্য এই যে ঈশ্বরের উপাসনাতে

Ans.—What they mean to imply by this is not clear. You sirs, will admit that Narada, Sanatkumara, Suka, Vasistha, Vyasa, Kapila and other sages had a knowledge of the Absolute and invisible Brahma. Nevertheless these sages recognised fire as fire and water as water; they administered justice, and taught their disciples; so how can you urge that they had lost all consciousness of the phenomenal world? Besides it seems very curious to me that you believe that by worshipping your gods the knowledge of the visible world becomes keener; but by praying to the invisible and absolute power, people become mad, and lose all consciousness of the external world. The knowledge of the world is not interfered with by a knowledge of the Deity, as a man who has the knowledge of God still continues to live in the world and his eyes and ears continue to perform their functions, and if he lives with his father, son, and others, he continues to fulfil his duties to them and all this is the will of the Supreme Being. It is not indicated where a knowledge of God clashes with the knowledge of the world. The sages of the past who were endowed with a knowledge of the true God according to your own admission, did nothing less than ordinary people in worldly matters, nay they did it with a more elevated and refined sense of duty. Some of the supporters of idolatry say, " Is it proper to discard the view held by all the world and in preference to follow the opinions of one or two men? Was there no scholar born before him? And is there none who is equal to him in learning now? Would they not also arrive at the same conclusions, if there were any truth in this?"

ভদ্রাভদ্র জ্ঞানের বহির্ভূত হইয়া লোক ক্ষিপ্ত হয় ইহাও লোকের বিশ্বাস অতএব। যদি কহ সর্ব্বত্র ব্রহ্মজ্ঞান করিলে ভেদ জ্ঞান আর ভদ্রাভদ্র জ্ঞান কেন থাকিবেক তাহার উত্তর এই যে লোকযাত্রা নির্ব্বাহ নিমিত্ত পূর্ব্ব পূর্ব্ব ব্রহ্মজ্ঞানীর ন্যায় চক্ষু কর্ণ হস্তাদির কর্ম্ম চক্ষু কর্ণ হস্তাদির অবশ্য করিতে হয় এবং পুত্রের সহিত পিতার কর্ম্ম পিতার সহিত পুত্রের ধর্ম্ম আচরণ করিতে হইবেক যেহেতু এ সকল নিয়মের কর্ত্তা ব্রহ্ম হয়েন। মধ্যে মধ্যে কহিয়া থাকেন যে পৃথিবীর সকল লোকের যাহা মত হয় তাহা ত্যাগ করিয়া দুই এক ব্যক্তির কথা গ্রাহ্য কে করে আর পূর্ব্বে কেহো পণ্ডিত কি ছিলেন না এবং অন্য কেহ পণ্ডিত কি সংসারে নাই যে তাঁহারা এই মতকে জানিলেন না

Ans.—Though I am pained at these reflections, yet I feel inclined to answer them for the furtherance of my cause. In the first instance, India does not form even one-twentieth part of the earth already known to us. The country inhabited mainly by the Hindus is known as Hindusthan. Excluding this Hindusthan, more than half of the entire population of the rest of the globe profess faith in an invisible Supreme Being. In Hindusthan itself, the Nirvanists, the Nanak Panthis, the followers of Dadu, the disciples of Siva, Narayana—ascetics and householders alike—worship one Supreme God. How is the view then tenable that the worship of one Supreme God is against the established ways of all the world? If the next contention,—that scholars before me have not joined such mode of prayer were true—how could we then possess the works of Vyasa, Vasistha and other sages who promulgated the pure doctrine of theism! The divine Sankara-charyya and other commentators on the Vedas have all tried to establish monotheistic principles, and Nanaka who lived only a few centuries ago, enjoined the worship of one Supreme Being as an imperative duty on the part of both the Sannyasins and householders belonging to the sect founded by him. In modern times there are thousands of men, from Bengal to the Punjab, who uphold and preach the noble theistic principle."

এবং উপদেশ করলেন না। যদ্যপিও এমত সকল প্রশ্নের শ্রবণে কেবল মানস দুঃখ জন্মে তথাপি কর্ত্তব্যানুরোধে উত্তর দিয়া যাইতেছি প্রথমত এ পর্য্যন্ত পৃথিবীর যে সীমা আমরা নির্দ্ধারণ করিয়াছি এবং যাতায়াত করিতেছি তাহার বিংশতি অংশের এক অংশ এই হিন্দোস্থান না হয়। হিন্দুরা যে দেশেতে প্রচুর রূপে বাস করেন তাহাকে হিন্দোস্থান কহা যায়। এই হিন্দোস্থান ভিন্ন অর্দ্ধেক হইতে অধিক পৃথিবীতে এক নিরঞ্জন পরব্রহ্মের উপাসনা লোকে করিয়া থাকেন এই হিন্দোস্থানেতেও শাস্ত্রোক্ত নির্ব্বাণ সম্প্রদায় এবং নানক সম্প্রদায় আর দাদু সম্প্রদায় এবং শিবনারায়ণী প্রভৃতি অনেকে কি গৃহস্থ কি বিরক্ত কেবল নিরাকার পরমেশ্বরের উপাসনা করেন তবে কিরূপে কহেন যে তাবৎ পৃথিবীর মতের বহির্ভূত এই ব্রহ্মোপাসনার মত হয় আর পূর্ব্বেও পণ্ডিতেরা যদি এই মতকে কেহ না জানিতেন এবং উপদেশ না করিতেন তবে ভগবান বেদব্যাস এই সকল সূত্র কিরূপ করিয়া লোকের উপকারের নিমিত্ত প্রকাশ করিলেন এবং বাশিষ্ঠী বশিষ্ঠাদি আচার্য্যেরা কি প্রকারে এইরূপ ব্রহ্মোপদেশের প্রচুর গ্রন্থ প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন। ভগবান শঙ্করাচার্য্য এবং ভাষ্যের টীকাকার সকলেই কেবল ব্রহ্ম স্থাপন এবং ব্রহ্মোপাসনার

The above shows that he had a rational answer for every argument of his antagonist, however petty or foolish; and the great patience with which he would try to convince them, knowing fully well that they were simply maligning him, is to be explained by his great love and his eagerness to lead others from error to truth. To know the superior merits of his composition, readers are referred to his Vedanta Sara in Bengali and to his English works. As the field traversed by him in his original works comprehends a wide range of theological matter containing technicalities, we do not find it convenient to give further extracts from them or their translations.

The Bengali grammar.

The Bengali grammar written by the Raja, though a short treatise, bears the impress of his great genius. Some of the Europeans had already been in the field with treatises on this subject. Mr. Halhed's Bengali grammar, which is one of the earliest attempts in the direction, is more interesting as a vocabulary, since it gives on a somewhat elaborate scale the meanings of words and translations of short sentences. It also gives selections from some of our old poems. The purely grammatical element is not very prominent among the various subjects comprised in the book. The Bengali writers who wrote grammar before Raja Ram Mohan Roy had in their heads the rules of Sanskrit grammar, and thought that the Bengali language as a matter of course was bound to conform to them. But Raja Ram Mohan Roy discarded Sanskrit grammar in so far as its rules could not be philologically applied to Bengali. We refer our readers to pages 727 and 738 of his Bengali works. He observed the genius of our language, and in what respects it differed from Sanskrit; he formulated principles

উপদেশ করিয়াছেন নব্য আচার্য্য গুরু নানক প্রভৃতি এই ব্রহ্মোপাসনাকে গৃহস্থ এবং বিরক্তের প্রতি উপদেশ করেন এবং আধুনিকের মধ্যে এই দেশ অবধি পঞ্জাব পর্য্যন্ত সহস্র সহস্র লোক ব্রহ্মোপাসক এবং ব্রহ্মবিদ্যার উপদেশকর্ত্তা আছেন।"

—*Vedanta Sara.*

based on the natural laws which govern Bengali, and treated the subject scientifically. He also indicated the broad lines on which a comprehensive Bengali grammar might be compiled. Unfortunately, however, no other writer on the subject after Raja Ram Mohan Roy was possessed of his great insight to continue the work that he had commenced; and the Bengali grammar has since fallen hopelessly into the hands of Sanskrit-knowing *pandits*. These with their erudite enunciation of rules about Sanskrit compound-words and its prosody have dominated the situation. Following too closely the steps of *Mugdhabodha* they are applauded by critics who belong to the same school. The *Gauriya Bhasar Vyakarana* by the Raja is a highly original publication and contains many important rules. On page 724 he deals with the pronunciation of words. He says that in Bengali the difference of pronunciation between শ, ষ, স, is not observed; but there are certain exceptions to this rule. When শ is joined with র, ক, ন it is pronounced as স, as in শ্রদ্ধা, শৃগাল and প্রশ্ন; similarly when স is joined with ত, থ, ন, র, ক it retains its Sanskritic sound of স as in স্তব, স্থান, স্রক্, সৃষ্টি. In all other places it is pronounced as শ. The chapter on Case is full of original observations. In the dative case, says the Raja, those words which bear the long vowel আ in the last letter adopt তে or য় as suffix. But those words which have ই, ঈ, উ, ঊ, এ, ঐ, ও, ঔ in their last letters adopt only তে to denote the locative form. Instances of the former are to be found in the forms মৃত্তিকাতে and মৃত্তিকায়, থালাতে and থালায়, শয্যাতে and শয্যায়, etc., and of the latter in ছুরিতে, হাতীতে, রজনীতে, etc. Regarding the forms of Bengali words in singular and plural numbers, the learned author gives curious rules which are nevertheless correct and testify to his accurate observation. The suffixes গুলি, সকল, etc., are generally adopted to indicate the plural number; in the case of men and higher beings the suffix রা is often used, and it is generally speaking restricted to them only; when, however, the suffix রা is used in the case of lower animals it is implied that such words do no longer signify them; for instance গরু সকল means

cows, but গরুরা is used to imply those men who are stupid as cows.*

Before we close the account of Raja Ram Mohan Roy we have to say a few words regarding the movement led by him for the abolition of *Suttee*. His Bengali pamphlets against *Suttee* were translated by him into English; and they aim chiefly at establishing the superiority of an unimpeachable and pure widowhood of woman in accordance with the rules of *Brahmacharyya* after the death of her husband, over the practice that largely prevailed in his times of self-immolation, against which he fought, in conjunction with European clergymen and officials.

The *Suttee*

Like other reforms this was also proposed and carried out in the teeth of great opposition. While alluding to the controversial literature that sprang up in connection with this movement we propose to take a dispassionate view of the history of *Suttee* in Bengal. It is an usage which was prevalent amongst the ancients. The rite was practised in early times amongst the Thracians, the Getæ, and the Scythians. Diodorus in B.C. 44 describes it to have occurred in the army of Eumenes upwards of 500 years before the Christian era (Diodorus Siculus, lib. XIX, Chapter II). The Danish Northmen of Europe retained the recollections of *Suttee* in the story of Balder, one of the sons of Odin.†

The custom grew in India as a natural result of the peculiarly organised social institutions of the Hindus. It has been more than once observed in the foregoing chapters that the Hindus aspire to a realisation of God through the various domestic ties which bind them to their homes. Without this value given to domestic virtues, which was the main basis of the Indo-Aryan civilisation, their joint-family system could not have stood. It is the call of home that has always made Hindus endure the

* Bengali works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, p. 733

† The Cyclopaedia of India by Balfour, p. 781.

greatest sacrifices. Their immortal epics bear striking evidences of this ideal governing their society. But no sacrifice within the precincts of one's home is raised to so high a point of merit as that prompted by sacred nuptial devotion. There are a thousand fables, stories and poems illustrating noble sacrifices of devoted wives for their husbands. The Hindu woman lives in the atmosphere of this ideal. From her tenderest years she is trained up to it. The stories of Savitri, Sita, Damayanti, Behulá—these are what a Hindu girl is accustomed to hear every evening in Bengal and even when she is a mere child she willingly fasts on the day of *Savitri Vrata*. The Hindu woman grew, as Spartan boys did in ancient Greece,—under great hardships imposed on them by society, but they were meant for a great purpose. Even now the stories and poems that she reads are full of high ideas illustrative of the noblest virtues attendant upon faithful wifehood. The ideal embodied in them would fascinate and attract any tender soul; for the tales of supreme sacrifice undergone for love, never pass in vain with those young audiences who are most susceptible to nobility of spirit.

The love of a Hindu wife is scarcely expressed in passionate utterances. It pervades her whole life. The sacrifices she runs, the spirit of resignation and of entirely losing herself in the thought of doing good to her husband, raise her love beyond all sorts of mundane considerations, not to speak of any for her own comforts. It is this spirit which made women court death willingly on the funeral pyre of the husband. They often died there like mute images without uttering a word,—without heeding the sensations of pain caused to the body. While their husbands lived, such women were not known to display their great love outwardly. They ministered to the wants of numerous members living together in the family, and gave the minutest attention to each of them and to the servants; but they really lived and moved, without ever saying so, in the thought of their husbands; they kept the vermillion mark on their forehead

and the shell-bracelets on their wrists; and prized these sacred signs of wifehood more dearly than their lives. A Hindu wife would sooner agree to be killed than allow them to be removed This patient all-engrossing sentiment, this love without a thought of return, constant and unchangeable through all vicissitudes of life, in spite of many ills,—is expressed in many of the old poems of Bengal,—in our folk-lore and in those rustic songs which I have mentioned in previous chapters.

The peculiar position of the Hindu wife trained her silently to sacrifices of all sorts for domestic feeling. She is not the joy or inspiration of social gatherings as a western woman is. Outside her home there is absolutely no scope for the appreciation of her qualities. Praise from outside world would be as assuredly spurned by her as abuse. Even in one's own family, it would not be good taste to allude to the beauty of a woman who has once borne a child. Her environment develops her domestic instincts more than anything else. But off from the rest of the world—in her own little home she is trained to an idealism of the highest sort, without the facts being observed by any. She would only be seen in public when she was to ascend the funeral pyre of her husband. Foreign people are apt to suppose that her martyrdom was the result of compulsion, oppression and superstition. But those, who possess a more intimate knowledge on the point, will see in *suttee* only an excess of that idealism that made Savitri, in our earliest times, shudder at the thought of her coming widowhood and Tara expresses a wish to burn herself with her deceased husband in the Ramayana. *Suttee* is the highest realisation of that dream of womanhood, the perfection of which was imagined by the ancients to lie in an all-absorbing thought of the husband. Each country has a peculiar idea of its own to inspire its people with a spirit of self-sacrifice, the growth of which has depended upon a succession of causes and circumstances peculiar to itself. Some people in the world's history have staked their fortune and life for what they called "a national cause," others for what they

believed to be the "word of God,"—as the iconoclasts once made it the mission of their lives to destroy temples and images at any cost or sacrifice. Hindu women similarly elected to die out of the devotion they bore to their husbands. On various reports left of the *Suttee* by European observers, who were drawn to involuntary admiration on witnessing such scenes, I quote two below. This will be helpful in rightly understanding the controversy held by the pro-Suttee champions against the attempts of the Raja.

"The widow was a remarkably handsome woman, apparently about thirty, and most superbly attired. Her manner was marked by great apathy to all around her and by complete indifference to the preparations which for the first time met her eye. From this circumstance an impression was given that she might be under the influence of opium; and in conformity with the declared intention of the European officers present to interfere, should any coercive measure be adopted by the Brahmins or relations, two medical officers were requested to give their opinions on the subject. They both agreed that she was quite free from any influence calculated to induce torpor or intoxication."

"Captain Burnes then addressed the woman, desiring to know whether the act she was about to perform was voluntary or enforced, and assuring her that, should she entertain the slightest reluctance to the fulfilment of her vow, on the part of the British Government he would guarantee the protection of her life and property. Her answer was calm, heroic and constant to her purpose: I die of my own free will; give me back my husband, and I will consent to live."

"Ere the renewal of the horrid ceremonies of death was permitted, again the voice of mercy, of expostulation and even of entreaty was heard; but the trial was vain, and the cool and collected manner with which the woman still declared her determination unalterable chilled and startled the most courageous. Physical pangs evidently excited no fears in her; her singular creed

the customs of her country, and her sense of conjugal duty, excluded from her mind the natural emotions of personal dread; and never did a martyr to a true cause, go to the stake with more constancy and firmness than did this delicate and gentle woman prepare to become the victim of a deliberate sacrifice to the tenets of her heathen creed. Accompanied by the officiating Brahmin, the widow walked seven times round the pyre, repeating the usual *mantras* or prayers, strewing rice and *cowries* on the ground, and sprinkling water from her hand over the bystanders, who believed this to be efficacious in preventing disease and expiating committed sins. She then removed her jewels, and presented them to her relations, saying a few words to each with calm soft smile of encouragement and hope. The Brahmins then presented her with a lighted torch, bearing which—

'Fresh as a flower just blown,
And warm with life, her youthful pulses playing,'

she stepped through the fatal door, and sat within the pile. The body of her husband wrapped in rich *kinkaubs*, was then carried seven times round the pile and finally laid across her knees. Thorns and grass were piled over the door; and again it was insisted that free space should be left, as it was hoped that the poor victim might yet relent, and rush from her fiery prison for the protection so freely offered. The command was readily obeyed; the strength of a child would have sufficed to burst the frail barrier which confined her, and a breathless pause succeeded; but the woman's constancy was faithful to the last. Not a sigh broke the death-like silence of the crowd, until a slight smoke, curling from the summit of the pyre, and then a tongue of flame, darting with bright and lightning-like rapidity into the clear blue sky, told us that the sacrifice was completed. Fearlessly had this courageous woman fired the pile, and not a groan had betrayed to us the moment when her spirit fled.''*

* Mrs. Postan's Random Sketches during her residence in one of the northern provinces of Western India in 1839.

The following is quoted from 'Bengal Under The Lieutenant Governors by C. E. Buckland, Vol. I, pages 160-161.

"Although it does not fall within his Lieutenant Governorship, I think the following account of a Suttee, as narrated by Sir F. Halliday, 70 years later, will be considered interesting, and it has never been printed elsewhere :—

"Suttee was prohibited by law in 1829. At and before that time I was acting as Magistrate of the district of Hooghly. Before the new law came into operation, notice was one day brought to me that a Suttee was about to occur a few miles from my residence. Such things were frequent in Hooghly as the banks of that side of the river were considered particularly propitious for such sacrifices. When the message reached me, Dr. Wise of the Medical Service and a clergyman (whose name I forget), who was Chaplain to the Governor-General, were visiting me and expressed a wish to witness the ceremony. Accordingly we drove to the appointed place where a large crowd of natives was assembled on the river bank and the funeral pile already prepared, the intended victim seated on the ground in front of it. Chairs were brought for us, and we sat down near the woman. My two companions, who did not speak the language, then began to press the widow with all the reasons they could urge to dissuade her from her purpose, all of which at their request I made the woman understand in her own language. To this she listened with grave and respectful attention but without being at all moved by it; the priests and many of the spectators also listening to what was said.

At length she showed some impatience and asked to be allowed to proceed to the pile. Seeing that nothing further could be done, I gave her the permission, but before she had moved, the clergyman begged me to put to her one more question,..."Did she know what pain she was about to suffer?" She, seated on the ground close to my feet, looked up at me with a scornful expression in her intelligent face and said for answer, "Bring a lamp": the lamp was brought, of the small sauce

boat fashion used by peasants, and also some *ghi* or melted butter and a large cotton wick. These she herself arranged in the most effective form and then said, "Light it;" which was done and the lamp placed on the ground before her. Then steadfastly looking at me with an air of grave defiance she rested her right elbow on the ground and put her finger into the flame of the lamp. The finger scorched, blistered and blackened and finally twisted up in a way which I can only compare to what I have seen happen to a quill pen in the flame of a candle. This lasted for some time, during which she never moved her hand, uttered a sound or altered the expression of her countenance. She then said:—"Are you satisfied?," to which I answered hastily, "satisfied," upon which with great deliberation she removed her finger from the flame, saying: "Now may I go?" To this I assented and she moved down the slope to the pile. This was placed on the edge of the stream. It was about 4½ ft. high, about the same length, and perhaps 3 ft. broad, composed of alternate layers of small billets of wood and light dry brushwood between four upright stakes. Round this she was marched in a noisy procession 2 or 3 times and ascended it, laying herself down on her side with her face in her hands like one composing herself to sleep, after which she was covered up with light brushwood for several inches, but not so as to prevent her rising had she been so minded. The attendants then began to fasten her down with long bamboos. This I immediately prohibited and they desisted unwillingly but without any show of anger. Her son, a man of about 30, was now called upon to light the pile.

It was one of those frequent cases in which the husband's death had occurred too far off for the body to be brought to the pile, and instead of it a part of his clothing had been laid thereon by the widow's side. A great deal of powdered resin and, I think, some *ghi* had been thrown upon the wood which first gave a dense smoke and then burst into flame. Until the flames drove me back I stood near enough to touch the pile, but I heard no sound and saw no motion, except one gentle upheaving of

the brushwood over the body, after which all was still. The son who had lighted the pile remained near it until it was in full combustion, and then rushing up the bank threw himself on the ground in a paroxysm* of grief. So ended the last Suttee that was lawfully celebrated in the district of Hooghly and perhaps in Bengal."

But sacrifices made by a few, under promptings of extra-ordinary sentiments, are not such as may be enforced in the case of every widow in a society. The Suttees in later times increased in number from very many causes besides that of affection. Within six or seven centuries before the abolition of the rite, the Hindu widows found their position insecure, as the country was overrun by the Muhammadan conquerors and by the Burmese and Portuguese marauders who seized helpless young widows and carried them away or which was worse, put them to indelible infamy. Even Nawabs and noblemen would sometimes not let go the opportunity to do the same as the robbers did, regarding beautiful Hindu widows. The genealogical works referred to by us in Chapter II contain many instances of such atrocities. The number of Suttees must have grown largely in proportion owing to these causes. Besides when one family boasted of its Suttees, the other families wanted, for the sake of increasing their prestige, to possess similar records of sacrifice from among their own members; so what had been in early ages a practice of but rare occurrence became frequent, often under compulsion. The following incident will show to what a heinous extent of barbarity the practice of *Suttee* might be carried.

*"About the year 1796, the following most shocking and atrocious murder, under the name of *Sahamarana*, was perpetrated at Majilpur, about a day's journey south from Calcutta. Banchharama, a Brahman of the above place, dying, his wife at a late hour went to be burnt with the body: all the previous ceremonies were performed; she was fastened on the pile, and

* Ward's On the Hindus, Vol. II, Part III, p. 304.

the fire was kindled; but the night was dark and rainy. When the fire began to scorch this poor woman, she contrived to disentangle herself from the dead body, and creeping from under the pile, hid herself among some brushwood. In a little time it was discovered that there was only one body on the pile. The relations immediately took the alarm and searched for the wretch; the son soon dragged her forth, and insisted that she should throw herself on the pile, or drown or hang herself; she pleaded for her life at the hands of her own son, and declared that she could not embrace so horrid a death—but she pleaded in vain: the son urged, that he should lose his caste, and that therefore he would die or she should. Unable to persuade her to hang or drown herself, the son and the others present then tied her hands and feet, and threw her on the funeral pile, where she quickly perished."

We ask our readers to read the vernacular treatises of the Raja on Suttee-rites, which are master-pieces of close argumentative writings disclosing his great humane feelings and profound scholarship.*

Raja Ram Mohan was born in Bengal when all the brightness had faded from the illuminated pages of our history, when the glorious had grown ignominous in many places, when faith and devotion had been reduced to superstition, "sweet religion become a mere rhapsody of words," and the scarcely audible beatings of the heart indicated the loss of all social vitality. He led us from superstition to faith, from darkness to light; and though he may seem to have found nothing good in the Hindu religion of his own day,—not even in the self-sacrificing devotion of true hearts which, though few, still weilded the greatest influence in the country, yet we must remember that, generally speaking, it was not the season for extolling a deteriorated virtue, for admiring the atrocious slaughter of women—too heinous an offence to be

The fruit of the Raja's labours.

* Raja Rama Mohan Roy's Bengali works, pp. 167-223.

condoned by idle panegyric. The movements in various fields of enlightenment started by the Raja have borne ample fruit. The educated community have followed his lead in the general awakening of the intellect observed throughout the country after his advent. The Raja was a great admirer of the English people and, with a sincere heart, approached them with prayers to aid him in his beneficent attempt to reform, and he found a ready response and sympathetic hearing from the rulers of the land. Though a scholar of world-wide renown and a perfect master of the most important classical and many modern languages, he did not despise his mother tongue. He wrote master-pieces in Bengali. "It is a remarkable fact that the address he presented to Lord William Bentinck was in Bengali, a circumstance which showed how deep was his love for his mother tongue."* His works in Bengali struck the keynote of a new style, for though the Raja was full of admiration for the English, yet he would not accept any matter second-hand; with him began an attempt at free enquiry after truth. The works by the missionaries and those that wrote under their instructions consisted, as already said, mainly of compilations and translations: but in the Bengali works of the Raja begins a new epoch and a movement for the right understanding of the truths of our own religion. Ram Mohan Roy began with the Vedanta; and taking the cue of rational explanation from him we have come down to the Puranas. From the time of Ram Mohan Roy, Bengali literature in its poems, romances and theological works, has striven to restate the truths contained in our classics in the light of western rationalism of thought; it has tried to combine the realistic mode of thinking peculiar to the West with oriental idealism; sometimes the occidental element has been too prominent in Bengali writings almost alienating itself from our national ideal in the views propounded, at others verging on extreme conservativeness, and blind orthodoxy. The conflict is going on without intermission up to the present, and a harmony has not yet, I am afraid, crowned the

* The English works of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vol. I., Introduction, p. XIX.

attempts of the opposing forces in this field. But all the same, we are conscious of a great activity in our literature and we owe it preeminently to the devoted labours of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who advanced its cause, not only by writing monumental works in Bengali himself, but by raising a controversy which has contributed a great deal to the rapid development of prose. Taking this view of matters, it cannot be considered unjust to call him the father of modern Bengali prose.

(c) *The writers that followed Raja Ram Mohan Roy—Devendra Nath Tagore—Akshay Kumar Datta and others*

After the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy the spirit of reform lay dormant for a while. Even the Brahma-Sabha that he had established, succumbed to those orthodox forms against which the great leader had fought all his life. In the year 1862 it was found that the Brahmins only were admitted to it, and that they held meetings with closed doors against all of other castes. Iswar Chandra Nyayaratna used to lecture before a select body of Brahmins in the Theistic Hall ; and in one of the subjects that he chose, he argued that Rama had been an incarnation of God. The missionaries knew Ram Mohan Roy to be their great foe inspite of all professions of amity and peace on both sides ; for under the outward form of Unitarian Christianity which the Raja seemed to profess, he was founding a new Theistic Church based on the Vedanta Philosophy and on Christian Morals. This would inevitably draw to itself those educated Hindus who, if such a society had not been organised by the Raja, would have gravitated towards the Christian Churches, and proved willing converts. The death of the Raja, and a total absence in the field of any suitable personage on whom his mantle could fall, gave an opportunity for a time to the Christian Missionaries to renew their attempts at proselytising with redoubled zeal. Stray cases come to our notice which show

Renewed activities of the missionaries.

vigorous procedure of these gentlemen. In 1845, Umes Chandra Sarkar and his wife were converted by Dr. Duff in a manner which created a great sensation amongst the whole native population of Calcutta. In fact on the very day of their conversion, the Hindus raised Rs. 40,000 to found a Hindu School in order to counteract the influence of Christian teaching in the schools established by the Missionaries.

Devendra Nath Tagore

At this juncture another great man appeared to take up the work of the great reformer. His intellectual powers were not so great as those of Ram Mohan Roy, but his strength of character, faith in religious views, power of sacrifice for the cause of what he considered right, high-mindedness and unflinching advocacy of theism have deservedly lifted him to the rank of a *Risi* in popular estimation. Devendra Nath Tagore has, moreover, furthered the cause of Bengali literature in no inconsiderable degree. He was the son of the distinguished Bengalee Dwarka Nath Tagore who was called Prince Dwarka Nath in England, and who enjoyed the great confidence of Queen Victoria during his stay in that country. Devendra Nath, heir to a princely fortune, and a man of remarkably handsome features and rare accomplishments, in his early youth realised the truth that life was short, fortune was transitory and religion the only solace of life. Impelled by a sense of moral duty,—for there was no legal obligation,—he handed over his immense inheritance to his father's creditors, who could have claimed no hold upon it. And the effect which this noble act of sacrifice produced on the minds of the people was evidenced by the bestowal of the title of Maharsi or great Risi on him by his countrymen. His creditors, fortunately, were no Shylocks. They arranged for the liquidation of debts in a way convenient to the youthful owner of the property ; but all the same a considerable portion of it had to be sold. But Devendra Nath was indifferent to worldly considerations. I quote an extract from his autobiography which is written in a simple and attractive style.

An extract from his autobiography.

* "My grand-mother loved me very much. In childhood I cared not for any one else but her. I used to take my meals with her, sit by her the whole day and sleep on the same bed with her. When she went to Kalighat to visit the shrine I used to accompany her thither. At one time she went to Vrindavan and Puri leaving me at home. I recollect how bitterly I wept owing to my separation from her. She was intensely devoted to religion. Every day at early dawn she used to bathe in the Ganges and weave garlands for the tutelary god *Salagram*. Sometimes she fasted from sunrise to sun-set and offered '*argha*' to the sun. I stayed with her on the roof, hearing it uttered so often: "O Thou of the colour of the Java, offspring of Kasyapa, radiant with rays, the dispeller of darkness and destroyer of sin, O Sun, I salute thee."

My grand-mother sometimes fasted the whole day and night, and during the whole of such nights *Kathakatas* and *Kirtan* songs went on in the house; we could not sleep owing to the noise. She used to supervise the household work and herself assisted the domestics in their service. Owing to her efficient management and firm control, all the work of our house was conducted with strict regularity. When the inmates of the house had all taken their meals she would cook her own food herself. I

* "দিদিমা আমাকে বড় ভাল বাসিতেন। শৈশবে তাঁহাকে ব্যতীত আমি আর কাহাকেও জানিতাম না। আমার শয়ন, উপবেশন, ভোজন, সকলই তাঁহার নিকট হইত। তিনি কালীঘাটে যাইতেন, আমি তাহার সহিত যাইতাম। তিনি যখন আমাকে ফেলে জগন্নাথক্ষেত্রে ও বৃন্দাবনে গিয়াছিলেন, তখন আমি বড়ই কাঁদিতাম। ধর্ম্মে তাঁহার অত্যন্ত নিষ্ঠা ছিল। তিনি প্রতিদিন অতি প্রত্যূষে গঙ্গাস্নান করিতেন। এবং প্রতিদিন শালগ্রামের জন্য স্বহস্তে পুষ্পের মালা গাঁথিয়া দিতেন। কখনো কখনো তিনি সংকল্প করিয়া উপবাস সাধন করিতেন—সূর্য্যোদয় হইতে সূর্য্যের অস্তকাল পর্য্যন্ত সূর্য্যকে অর্ঘ্য দিতেন। আমিও সে সময়ে ছাতের উপরে রৌদ্রেতে তাঁহার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে থাকিতাম, এবং সেই সূর্য্য অর্ঘ্যের মন্ত্র শুনিয়া শুনিয়া আমার অভ্যাস হইয়া গেল। "জবাকুসুম সঙ্কাশং কাশ্যপেয়ং মহাদ্যুতিং। ধ্বান্তারিং সর্ব্বপাপঘ্নং প্রণতোঽস্মি দিবাকরং।" দিদিমা এক এক দিন হরিবাসর করিতেন, সমস্ত রাত্রি কথা হইত এবং কীর্ত্তন হইত; তাহার শব্দে আমরা রাত্রিতে ঘুমাইতে পারিতাম না। তিনি সংসারের সমস্ত তত্ত্বাবধারণ করিতেন। তাঁহার কার্য্যদক্ষতার জন্য তাঁহার শাসনে গৃহেতে সকল কার্য্য সুশৃঙ্খলরূপে চলিত। পরে সকলের আহারান্তে তিনি স্বপাকে আহার করিতেন।

used to share her plain meal, composed of boiled rice and simple vegetables (হবিষ্যান্ন); this food I relished more than my own. The beauty of her person was as great as her accomplishments, and her faith in religion was equally great. But she could not bear the visit of Ma-gosains (women who posed as teachers of the Vaisnava faith) to our house. Though her faith was mixed with superstition she also evinced a considerable freedom in her religious views. With her I often visited the image of Gopinath in our family residence. I never wanted to come out of the temple without her. I used to sit on her lap and through the window quietly observe all that passed. My grand-mother is no more; but after how many days of weary search for the truth have I found One who is more than even my beloved grand-mother ever was to me! Seated on the lap of the divine Mother I quietly observe all that transpires through Her wishes.

Shortly before her death my grand-mother one day told me 'I have decided to bequeath to you all that I have in the world, I won't give it to any one else.' Thereupon she gave me the key to her box; I opened it and found some gold and silver coins in it. I told people that I had found parched rice in my grand-mother's box. In the year 1835 her end drew near. My father had at that time gone on a trip to the neighbourhood of Allahabad.

আমিও তাঁহার হবিষ্যান্নের ভাগী ছিলাম। তাঁহার সেই প্রসাদ আমার যেমন স্বাদু লাগিত তেমন আপনার খাওয়া ভাল লাগিত না। তাঁহার শরীর যেমন সুন্দর ছিল, কার্য্যেতে তেমনি তাঁহার পটুতা ছিল, এবং ধর্ম্মেতে ও তাঁহার তেমনি আস্থা ছিল। কিন্তু তিনি মা-গোঁসাইয়ের সতত যাতায়াত বড় সহিতে পারিতেন না। তাঁহার ধর্ম্মের অন্ধ বিশ্বাসের সহিত একটু স্বাধীনতাও ছিল। আমি তাঁহার সহিত আমাদের পুরাতন বাড়ীতে গোপীনাথ ঠাকুর দর্শনার্থে যাইতাম। কিন্তু আমি তাঁহাকে ছাড়িয়া বাহিরে আসিতে ভাল বাসিতাম না। তাঁহার ক্রোড়ে বসিয়া গবাক্ষ দিয়া শান্তভাবে সমস্ত দেখিতাম। এখন আমার দিদিমা আর নাই। কিন্তু কতদিন পরে, কত অন্বেষণের পরে, আমি এখন দিদিমার দিদিমাকে পাইয়াছি ও তাঁহার ক্রোড়ে বসিয়া জগতের লীলা দেখিতেছি। দিদিমা মৃত্যুর কিছুদিন পূর্ব্বে আমাকে বলেন "আমার যা কিছু আছে আমি তাহা আর কাহাকেও দিব না, তোমাকেই দিব"। পরে তিনি তাঁহার বাক্সের চাবিটা আমাকে দেন। আমি তাঁহার বাক্স খুলিয়া কতকগুলিন টাকা ও মোহর পাইলাম, লোককে বলিলাম যে আমি মুড়ি মুড়কি পাইয়াছি। ১৭৫৭ শকে দিদিমার

The physician said that the patient should no longer be kept at home. Whereupon our relations came and brought my grandmother down to the ground-floor and made preparations to take her to the Ganges.* But she was still hoping to live and did not like to be carried to the Ganges. She said, "If Dwarka Nath (her son) were here, he would never allow you to remove me from home as you are doing." The men did not pay any heed to her words, but went on carrying her towards the Ganges; upon which she said, "As you have not obeyed my wishes I shall cause you great trouble. I shall not die soon-"† On reaching the Ganges they placed her in a hut of tiles. She lived three nights in that situation. I was with her all this time. On the night previous to the day when she would expire, I was seated on a mat spread near the tiled hut, the full moon had risen on the horizon and close by me was the funeral ground. At that time they were singing *kirtan* songs around my grandmother. One ran thus :—

"When will that blessed day come, when I shall leave this mortal body reciting thy name, O Hari?"

যখন মৃত্যুকাল উপস্থিত, তখন আমার পিতা এলাহাবাদ অঞ্চলে পর্য্যটন করিতে গিয়াছিলেন, বৈদ্য আসিয়া কহিল রোগীকে আর ঘরে রাখা হইবে না। অতএব সকলে আমার পিতামহীকে গঙ্গাতীরে লইয়া যাইবার জন্য বাড়ীর বাহিরে আসিল। কিন্তু দিদিমা আরও বাঁচিতে চান, গঙ্গায় যাইতে তাঁহার মত নাই, তিনি বলিলেন যে "যদি দ্বারকানাথ বাড়ীতে থাকিত তবে তোরা কখনই আমাকে লইয়া যাইতে পারতিস্ না।" কিন্তু লোকে তাহা শুনিল না। তাঁহাকে লইয়া গঙ্গাতীরে চলিল। তখন তিনি কহিলেন, "তোরা যখন আমার কথা না শুনে আমাকে গঙ্গায় নিয়ে গেলি, তেমনি আমি তোদের সকলকে খুব কষ্ট দিব, আমি শীঘ্র মরিব না।" গঙ্গাতীরে লইয়া একটী খোলার চালাতে তাহাকে রাখা হইল। সেখানে তিনি তিন রাত্রি জীবিত ছিলেন। আমি সেই সময়ে গঙ্গাতীরে তাঁহার সঙ্গে নিয়ত থাকিতাম। দিদিমার মৃত্যুর পূর্ব্বদিন রাত্রিতে আমি ঐ চালার নিকটবর্ত্তী নিমতলার ঘাটে একখানা চাঁচের উপর বসিয়া আছি, ঐ দিন পূর্ণিমার রাত্রি —চন্দ্রোদয় হইয়াছে, নিকটে শ্মশান। তখন দিদিমার নিকট নাম সঙ্কীর্ত্তন হইতেছিল,

* The usual custom of the Hindus is to take the dying people to the bank of the Ganges or to any other river that may be near, when the case is declared as hopeless and death is expected at every moment.

† If a person does not die soon on reaching the Ganges, the carriers are required to wait there till her death and undergo great hardships

A gentle breeze was carrying the sound to my ear; suddenly at that moment a strange emotion passed over my mind. For the time being I became an entirely different man from what I was.—I felt a total abhorrence for wealth. The mat on which I sat appeared to me to be my proper and fit place. The rich carpets and all seemed worthless and of no value to me; I felt a complacency and joy which I had never experienced before. I was only 18 years old at the time.

"এমন দিন কি হবে হরি নাম বলিয়া প্রাণ যাবে।" বায়ুর সঙ্গে তাহা অল্প অল্প আমার কাণে আসিতেছিল। এই অবসরে হঠাৎ আমার মনে এক আশ্চর্য্য উদাস ভাব উপস্থিত হইল। আমি যেন আর পূর্ব্বের মানুষ নই। ঐশ্বর্য্যের উপর একেবারে বিরাগ জন্মিল। যে চাঁচের উপর বসিয়া আছি, তাহাই আমার পক্ষে ঠিক বোধ হইল, মনের মধ্যে এক অভূতপূর্ব্ব আনন্দ উপস্থিত হইল। তখন আমার বয়স ১৮ বৎসর।"

(2) *

So long I had lain deep-plunged in the pleasures of luxury. I had never for one moment felt any longing for truth. I never cared to know what religion or God was; nobody gave me any instruction on the subject. The joy I felt on the funeral ground that day overflowed my soul. Language is feeble; how can I express it or convey what I felt to others? No one can experience this joy by filling his head with logical discussions. Who says there is no God? Here is the evidence of his existence: I was not

* দ্বিতীয় পরিচ্ছেদ

এতদিন আমি বিলাসের আমোদে ডুবিয়া ছিলাম। তত্ত্বজ্ঞানের কিছুমাত্র আলোচনা করি নাই। ধর্ম্ম কি, ঈশ্বর কি, কিছুই জানি নাই, কিছুই শিখি নাই। শ্মশানের সেই উদাস আনন্দ, তৎকালের সে স্বাভাবিক সহজ আনন্দ মনে আর ধরে না। ভাষা সর্ব্বথা দুর্ব্বল, আমি সে আনন্দ কিরূপে লোককে বুঝাইব? তাহা স্বাভাবিক আনন্দ। তর্ক করিয়া যুক্তি করিয়া সে আনন্দ কেহ পাইতে পারে না। সেই আনন্দ ঢালিবার জন্য ঈশ্বর অবসর খোঁজেন। সময় বুঝিয়াই তিনি আমাকে এ আনন্দ দিয়াছিলেন।

prepared for it; how could I then have felt such joy! With this spirit of asceticism and joy I came home at midnight. I could not sleep that night. The reason of my sleeplessness was this ecstasy of soul; as if moon-light had spread itself over my mind for the whole of that night. At dawn I went to the bank of the Ganges to see my grand-mother. I found her drawing her last breath. They had brought her down to the Ganges and were enthusiastically reciting in a loud voice "Ganga-Narayana-Brahma". She died immediately. I approached her and saw that one of her hands lay on her breast, the middle finger pointed towards heaven. 'Recite the name of Hari', she said at the last moment pointing with her finger, which remained fixed towards heaven. As I saw it I surmised that while leaving this world it was God and hereafter that she pointed to me, beloved as I was. My grand-mother was not only my greatest friend in this life, but also my friend in the hereafter."

The Early Brahma Samaj.

In the year 1845, Devendra Nath organised a band of workers who accepted the Brahma Dharma and gave up "idolatrous practices." The number swelled to five hundred in 1849. We find the name of Aksay Kumar Dutta, the great Bengali writer of this period, in the list of the first batch of Brahmas.

কে বলে ঈশ্বর নাই? এই তো তাঁর অস্তিত্বের প্রমাণ। আমি তো প্রস্তুত ছিলাম না, তবে কোথা হইতে এ আনন্দ পাইলাম? এই ঔদাস্য ও আনন্দ লইয়া রাত্রি দুই প্রহরের সময় আমি বাড়ীতে আসিলাম। সে রাত্রিতে আমার নিদ্রা হইল না। এ অনিদ্রার কারণ আনন্দ, সারা রাত্রি যেন একটা আনন্দ-জ্যোৎস্না আমার হৃদয়ে জাগিয়া রহিল। রাত্রি প্রভাত হইলে দিদিমাকে দেখিবার জন্য আবার গঙ্গাতীরে যাই, তখন তাঁহার শ্বাস হইয়াছে। সকলে ধরাধরি করিয়া দিদিমাকে গঙ্গার গর্ভে নামাইয়াছে এবং উৎসাহের সহিত উচ্চৈঃস্বরে "গঙ্গা নারায়ণ ব্রহ্ম" বলিতেছে। দিদিমার মৃত্যু হইল। আমি নিকটস্থ হইয়া দেখিলাম, তাঁহার হস্ত বক্ষঃস্থলে, এবং অনামিকা অঙ্গুলীটী ঊর্দ্ধমুখে আছে। তিনি "হরিবোল" বলিয়া অঙ্গুলী ঘুরাইতে ঘুরাইতে পরলোকে চলিয়া গেলেন। তাহা দেখিয়া আমার বোধ হইল, মরিবার সময় ঊর্দ্ধে অঙ্গুলি নির্দ্দেশ করিয়া আমাকে দেখাইয়া গেলেন "ঐ ঈশ্বর ও পরকাল।" দিদিমা যেমন আমার ইহকালের বন্ধু ছিলেন, তেমনি পরলোকেরও বন্ধু।"

In the year 1840, the Tattva Bodhini Patrika was started by Devendra Nath Tagore and Babu Aksay Kumar Dutta was appointed as editor. Devendra Nath Tagore compiled a code for the guidance of Brahma-life from the Upanisad in 1848, to which he also appended a Bengali translation. This serves as the hand-book and guide to the modern Brahmas—specially to the members of the Adi Samaj. The Bengali translation does great credit to the compiler owing to its simplicity and elegance, and it is an interesting point to note that Devendra Nath dictated the treatise to Aksay Kumar Dutta who took it down, the whole thing occupying only three hours.

Aksay Kumar Dutta.

The great activity and the religious earnestness displayed by the band of noble workers has borne great fruit in various spheres of Bengali life. Bengali literature particularly has been immensely profited by them. The Tattva Bodhini Patrika under the editorship of Babu Aksay Kumar Dutta weilded an influence which it is difficult to conceive now-a-days. "It is scarcely possible" writes Mr. R. C. Dutt "in the present day when journals have multiplied all over the country to describe adequately how eagerly the moral instructions and earnest teachings of Aksay Kumar conveyed in that famous paper, were perused by a large circle of thinking and enlightened readers. People all over Bengal awaited every issue of the paper with eagerness; and the silent and sickly, but indefatigable, worker at his desk swayed for a number of years the thoughts and opinions of the thinking portion of Bengal."*

It was at this time also that the young Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, who had already passed through his novitiate in the art of Bengali composition as a *pundit* in Fort William College, was first winning his laurels in the literary field. He had already written his *Vatrisa Simhasana* which showed unmistakable traces of that elegant and correct

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

* Literature of Bengal by R. C. Dutt, p. 87.

style which later on developed so splendidly in his *Sitar Vanavasa*, *Sakuntala* and other works. It was at this time also that Peary Chand Mitra (*nom-de-plume Tek Chand Thakur*)—whose '*Alaler Gharer Dulal*' or 'The Spoilt Child,' many European writers have so freely eulogised, some comparing it with the best productions of Moliere or Fielding—was trying to master the simple and colloquial style spoken by the gentle and rustic folk of Bengal. We cannot, however, review the works of these master-minds, as our scope is limited to a treatment of the subject up to 1850, and most of their works were written in the decade that followed that year.

Tek Chand Thakur

Babu Aksay Kumar Dutta, however, whose life like Pope's was a "a long disease" had already written a considerable portion of those valuable contributions to the *Tattva Bodhini Patrika* by 1850,—which were subsequently compiled by him and published in the form of separate books such as, '*Charu Patha*,' '*Vahya Bastur Sahita Manava Prakitir Sambandha Vichara*' &c. and we trust it will not be going beyond the limit to give a few extracts from his contributions to the *Tattva Bodhini Patrika*. The following is taken from one of the issues of the paper published in 1850 :—

Extracts from Aksay Babu's works.

* "A heart void of love may be compared to a desert through which no current of water flows. Both are barren and fruitless. It is a highly fortunate circumstance for us that our Almighty Father has endowed the beings of the earth with abundance of love and devotion. There are persons who love wealth, some seek after reputation, some knowledge, but those that are particularly blessed love God. There is no object higher than love. If there were no love in this earth, where then would

* "জলশূন্য মরুভূমি ও প্রীতিবিহীন অন্তঃকরণ উভয়ই তুল্য। উভয়ই নীরস ও নিষ্ফল। কিন্তু ইহা আমাদিগের পরম সৌভাগ্যের বিষয় এই যে প্রীতিপূর্ণ পরমেশ্বর মর্ত্তালোকে অপর্য্যাপ্ত প্রেম বিতরণ করিয়াছেন। কেহ বা ধনের, কেহ বা মানের, কেহ বা জ্ঞানের, কেহ বা যশের এবং কোন কোন ভাগ্যবান্ ব্যক্তি পরমেশ্বরের প্রেমে মগ্ন হইয়া রহিয়াছেন। প্রীতির পর আর পদার্থ নাই। প্রীতি না থাকিলে কোথায় বা

have been the heart to enjoy the beauty of a delightful garden, diffusing pleasant fragrance in the breeze, the glad-some beauty of a night clothed in the charming white light of the full moon! Where then would have been the pleasures of conversation with one's devoted, chaste and accomplished wife, whose face radiant with love's glow, beams forth the light of the full moon! Where would have been without love the sweet smiling faces of children, beautiful as painted cherubs and innocent, pure and gay as flowers,—the wonderful harmony that pervades a family of spotless reputation, the members bound by ties of love and full of reverence for religion! Where would have been that vivifying and heavenly intercourse with friends of high character dearer to us than our own selves, and in whose hearts dwell self-sacrificing love and all high qualities! Where would have been those soul-stirring poems, store-houses of high and lofty emotions, which overwhelm us with the never-failing effect of their sweet and matchless melody!"

Imitation of English style.

This appears like a Bengali version of one of the familiar essays of the Rambler with Seneca's sayings as head-lines, the difference being that the oriental imitation is even more over-coloured and high flown than the style of Dr. Johnson himself. The writings of Addison and Steele in the Spectator and those of Dr. Johnson in the Rambler supplied models for the Bengali writer, who combined with his Moral and Theological discourses dissertations on Etiology and Science much after Paley.

সুগন্ধময় পুষ্পোদ্যানের মনোহর শোভা, কোথায় বা শুভ্রবর্ণা সুধাময়ী পূর্ণিমা নিশির সুশীতল নির্ম্মল সুখকর জ্যোতি, কোথায় বা গুণবতী পুণ্যবতী পতিপ্রিয়া প্রিয়তমার পৌর্ণমাসী তুল্য প্রেমোৎফুল্ল মনোহর আনন সন্দর্শন ও তাহার সহিত সুধাময় মধুর আলাপ, কোথায় বা চিত্রিতপুত্তলিকা তুল্য প্রফুল্ল কুসুম সদৃশ সহাস্য শিশুগুলির নিষ্কলঙ্ক মুখশ্রী, কোথায় বা পরস্পর প্রীতিযুক্ত নিষ্পাপ পুণ্যশীল পরিবারের আশ্চর্য্য সুদৃশ্যতা, কোথায় বা জন্মাবধি প্রণয় পবিত্র সুচরিত্র মিত্রের স্বর্গোপম নিরুপম সুখদায়ক সহবাস, কোথায় বা রসার্দ্রচিত্ত পদাবলীর সরস লালিত্য ও অনুপম মাধুর্য্য থাকত?"

Supplementary Notes

TO

CHAPTER VII

(i) Three early centres of Vernacular writings.
(ii) The patronage accorded to Vernacular writers.
(iii) Peace and its boon.

I.—Three Early Centres of Vernacular Writings

Before the advent of Chaitanya Deva we find three recognized centres of Vernacular composition. The songs of the Vaisnavas had for their principal seat the historic land of Birbhum and its contiguous districts. Jaya Deva hailed from Kenduli in Birbhum and a few centuries after him, Chandi Das sang his celestial lay from the village Nannur in the same district. When Vaisnavism was at its zenith in Bengal, its chief exponents and song-masters flourished in this part of the country. This Vaisnava movement belonged to the people and required no aristocratic patronage to push it in its forward course; it drew its nutrition straight from the soil and soon, by its own power, attained a most luxuriant growth.

Birbhum, the early Vaisnava centre

In Eastern Bengal where Vaisnavism was yet unknown, the traditions of the Buddhistic age were the inspiration of the songs of the Manasa and Chandi-cults. The traditions of Behula's wonderful devotion and Chand-Sadagar's stern defiance to Manasa Devi,—the story of Dhanapati Sadagar and his adherence to the Saiva faith in the face of great dangers—belong to a period when Brahmanic influence had not yet commenced. As I have already said, the chief actors in the drama of these stories belong to the mercantile classes and some of them are of even humbler origin. The Brahmin

Eastern Bengal, the centre of Renaissance

has hardly any function to discharge in them. Though after the Hindu Renaissance, these stories were racast by the Brahmins and worked out from mere popular fables into poems of great beauty, their original ground-work, with its traditions of a society which is anterior to that built up by Brahmanical influence, remains unchanged. The earliest writer of *Manasa-mangal*, that we have yet been able to trace, was one Hari Datta. He lived in Mymensingh, or somewhere in its vicinity, more than six hundred years ago. Narayan Deva and Bijay Gupta came after him in the 15th century and latterly Sasthibara and Ganga Das, father and son, wrote Manasa-mangals, which the subsequent poets of the Manasa-cult of east and west alike imitated. These early poets were all of Eastern Bengal. We must remember that the tale of Manasa Devi is of much older date than even six hundred years. In this country earlier efforts are always lost when a gifted successor assimilates and embodies the best features of his predecessors' works in his new poem. Thus nearly a dozen early poems of the Mahabharata, written before Kasi Das, were all forgotten by the people, until quite lately, these works were again brought to the notice of the public by scholarly research. The earlier poets of the Manasa-cult all wrote their poems in Eastern Bengal; and these supplied inspiration to the poets of the western districts in a subsequent age. Ketakadas-Ksemananda and other poets of the *Rarh Desa* abridged the story described by East Bengal poets, adding some poetical features which the improved resources of our tongue had placed at their command. The Chandi-cult had also its earliest exponents in the poets of Eastern Bengal. Madhavacharyya was a native of Mymensingh and Dvija Janardan probably of Tippera. Owing to the great beauty of Mukundaram's poem written in later times, preceding attempts in the same field which had belonged to Eastern Bengal, were cast into the shade. Manuscripts of these early works, from two to three centuries old, have been recovered not only from Eastern Bengal but also from the *Rarh Desa*, showing that they were at one time read by the

people of the whole of Bengal. We thus see that poems belonging to the various Sakta-cults had for their earliest home the much despised east of the country, which remained politically free for more than a century, after Western Bengal had been conquered by the Muhammadans. The Sena kings at Vikrampur patronised Brahmins; and it was natural that in the 13th century Vikrampur should be turned into an important seat of classical learning. The first translation of the Mahabharata was undertaken by Sanjay, probably a Brahmin of Vikrampur. He belonged to the *Bharadvaja Gotra*, and compiled the translation in an abridged form. The next translation of the great epic by Kavindra Paramesvara, an inhabitant of Chittagong, rose to the highest point of popularity; it was written in the latter part of the 15th century, and was read by the people of east and west alike. Manuscripts of this recension of the Mahabharata, written about three centuries ago, have been received not only from Chittagong, Noakhali, Dacca, Mymensingh, Tippera, and Sylhet, but also from various parts of Western Bengal. We have with us an old manuscript of the poem recovered from the village of Khalisani, near French Chandernagar, and several others are to be found in the library of Babu Nagendra Nath Vasu, obtained by him from Patrasayer and other villages of Birbhum. A manuscript of this poem about 200 years old was collected by the late Mr. Umesh Chandra Batabyal from a village in the district of Rangpur. We may conceive from all this how extensively popular Kavindra's Mahabharata was in those days. Amongst the older recensionists of the Mahabharata, the influence of Kavindra Paramesvara was the greatest on Nityananda and Kasi Das—the two great luminaries who have enlightened our masses on the beauties of the classical epic in comparatively recent times. There is a host of other early Eastern Bengal poets on the subject of the Mahabharata whose works will be found mentioned in the body of this book.

Krittivasa, the earliest writer of the Ramayana, got his education in Eastern Bengal, somewhere on the banks of the

Padma, as he has himself informed us in his autobiography. His ancestors had belonged to Vikrampur, and the family were driven to Phulia by the oppression of Tugral Khan in the year 1348. Sasthibar and Ganga Das whose poems have already been mentioned here in connection with Manasa-literature, wrote elaborate works on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata about 350 years ago. These poets were inhabitants of Jhinardi in Vikrampur; manuscripts of their poems have been found in large numbers, in various districts of Western Bengal, as they have been in the native districts of the poets themselves. It will thus appear that Eastern Bengal, having been one of the great seats of Sanskrit learning, produced a number of translations that helped to disseminate Puranic ideas amongst the masses. Before the advent of Chaitanya, Eastern Bengal thus formed the chief nucleus of Vernacular composition. Sakta-cult had strong adherents in that part of the country and classical learning was encouraged by Hindu Kings and noble men. These helped powerfully in the importation of Sanskrit words into our tongue—a process which is especially conspicuous in the translations that were compiled in that province.

This wave was retarded by the democratic movement in letters that was inspired by Chaitanya. The Vaisnavas adopted Bengali as the chief vehicle for the teaching of their religion and at once monopolised the right of producing literature in it. This accounts for the flourishing growth of vernacular literature in the *Rarh Desa*, West Bengal from the 16th century onwards. The light that came from the East gradually subsided below the horizon of our letters, and under Vaisnava influence, even the Sakta writers of Western Bengal profited by the general intellectual awakening there, and wrote poems of considerable beauty, which gradually overshadowed the works written by the poets of Eastern Bengal, till the latter lost all the lustre that she had once possessed. She had once occupied the place of pioneer in Vernacular composition, but this has now passed completely out of our memory. The

Eastern Bengal falls to the background.

Bat-tala publishers have confined their attention to manuscripts of Bengali poems of comparatively later date, such as were available in the vicinity of Calcutta, and this fact has further helped to obliterate the memory of the early poems of Eastern Bengal until recent discoveries brought to light heaps of long forgotten manuscripts mainly from the houses of the rustics of that country.

The Songs of Pala Kings and Dharma-mangal poems came from North Bengal.

The third seat of Vernacular composition, which was perhaps one of the oldest, was North Bengal. The songs of the Pala Kings were first sung in the old capital of Gaur and its vicinity. Ramai Pandit composed his Manual of Dharma worship in Bengali towards the end of the 10th century. He was born in the district of Bankura but Gaur was his chief field of work. The story of Lausen, to be found in the Dharma-Mangal, relates to the adventures and successes of the hero who was a nephew of the King, Dharmapala II, and the incidents of the poem gather round the old capital of Bengal. The Dharma-cult flourished under the patronage of the Pala Kings, and the Vernacular literature of this cult had, for its original home, the historic land where these Kings reigned.

Summary

We thus arrive at the following conclusions :—

(1) Rarh Desa in olden times was the favoured seat of the growth of Vaisnava ideas. Long before Chaitanya, she delighted in Vaisnava songs and in the study of the Bhagavata which was first translated into Bengali metrical verse, about 425 years ago, by Maladhar Basu, one of her illustrious poets.

(2) Eastern Bengal produced the earliest works of the Chandi and Manasa cults, and her learned writers compiled most of the earliest recensions of the Sanskrit epics. Eastern Bengal thus gave the earliest impetus towards the dissemination of Puranic ideas amongst the masses.

(3) From North Bengal we received our songs of the Pala Kings and our earliest Dharma-mangals. These, as we have said, deal with the exploits and adventures of Lausen, a nephew of the King Dharmapala II of Gaur.

These were the three centres,—the early fields of the activities of our poets in vernacular composition. *Rarh Desa* in the 16th century came to the fore and dominated the great intellectual awakening brought about by Chaitanya.

II.—The Patronage accorded to Vernacular Writers

In the first chapter of this book, we indicated how the Hindu Courts, following the examples of Muslim chiefs and noblemen, extended their patronage to the Vernacular poets. Bengali gradually became a favourite vehicle for the expression of thought with scholarly people; and we scarcely find a poet of any renown who was not rewarded and patronised by some noble man. The Vaisnava poets alone did not care for such patronage, but all others considered it a great privilege and honour to dedicate their poems to their rich patrons, extolling their qualities in terms of high-sounding panegyric and poetry.

We find Kavi Kankan patronised by Bankura Roy, Raja of Arrah, Brahman Bhumi at a very critical moment of his life, when 8 maunds of rice offered by the Raja to the famished members of the poet's family elicited his grateful acknowledgments which have found a place in the immortal poem of Chandi. But gradually the Rajas became more bountiful to the vernacular poets and towards the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, we find vernacular writings of merit very considerably rewarded. We have seen that Raja Jay Narayan of Bhu-kailas made considerable sacrifices of time and money to bring his translation of the Kasi Khanda to satisfactory completion. He travelled in different parts of the

country for a period of six months in quest of MSS. of the Sanskrit poem. This journey in those days, made in a style befiting the rank of a Raja of his high status, meant a very considerable expenditure. Besides this he had to maintain for a long time nearly a dozen Pandits for the purpose. Raja Krisna Chandra's bounty towards classical learning was well-known. His liberal gifts to Bharat Chandra and Rama Prasad, two gifted Vernacular poets of his time, is also not less worthy of note. Bharat Chandra was appointed his Court-poet on Rs. 40 a month. This amount about the time of the battle of Plassey was not at all insignificant or small, when we see that Warren Hastings at a much later period drew a pay of Rs. 300 a month, as member of the Council. Major Rennell* as Survey General of India was in 1767 granted a pay of Rs. 300 a month, and this amount was considered to be unusually high requiring an elaborate explanation from the authorities! We find Jay Chandra, a Raja of the Chittagong district, granting an allowance of Rs. 10 per day to the poet Bhavani Nath for translating a poem called the Laksmana Digvijaya into Bengali verse. This book was compiled about the middle of the eighteenth century and must have occupied the poet for at least six months. Rs. 300 a month in those days must have been equal to at least 10 times its present value.

Remuneration to the poets and copyists.

Not only poets but even copyists of vernacular poems received a high remuneration for their labour. A copyist of the 18 Parvas of the Mahabharata by Kavindra Paramesvara wrote the following concluding paragraph at the close of his MS. in 1714 A.D. :—

"This Mahabharata, containing 18 Parvas (copied by me) belongs to Sri Govinda Ram Roy. The total number of pages is 789. My name is Anantaram Sarma—copyist. The remuneration promised is the maintenance of my family for life in a becoming style. On this condition I have copied the work

* Major Rennell's life in Asiatic Society's Journal, No. 3, Vol. III, p. 2.

with great care. Besides this, I have received rewards in cash; and orders for daily allowance and annual gifts have also been obtained. Good luck attend the donor, Saka 1636—1124 B. S. This is the 25th day of Kartic. Finished on Thursday at noon, at Solagram—the native village of the copyist." This Solagram is in the District of Tippera and the MS. from which the above is quoted now belongs to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

III.—Peace and Her Boon

A peaceful administration stimulates and nourishes intellectual activities; and under British rule we are in enjoyment of the manifold benefits of peace. This has caused the rapid and astonishing growth of our prose within the past century. Bengali now heads the list of the Vernaculars of India in point of its many-sided literary activities and general excellence. Many books written in our tongue have been translated into the Vernaculars of other provinces of India; and the number of our readers is fast increasing, as the field and scope of our language are widening. This excellent result is in a large measure due to Bengal being the chief seat of Government. We have been in touch with the civilisation of the West earlier than other Provinces. By the introduction of Bengali into our University, a healthy impetus has been given to the cause of Vernacular literature, and we may confidently hope that this will be productive of strikingly good results. May my country steadily advance in her onward course under the enlightened administration of our present Rulers. Our review of the Bengali Literature, however, ends with 1850. The historian of a later epoch of this literature will have to acknowledge with gratitude the deep debt which our tongue has owed to England and her people in comparatively recent times.

The rapid growth of Bengali prose.

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